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Anderson Photo. St. Peter's Rome.

*Christ Enthroned.*

# GIOTTO

BY

F. MASON PERKINS

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# PREFACE

THE present little volume can lay no claim to be other than a general review of Giotto's life and works, the limits of its pages having rendered impossible any more detailed treatment of the subject. To many, it will doubtless appear of too critical a nature to afford either pleasure or amusement; others, again, will find it lacking in the usual fund of pleasing anecdote which forms so attractive an element in much of the literature that has gathered about Giotto's name. To these admirers of the master, I must counsel a return to the pages of Vasari and his commentators. To those few, however, who look for something more than a mere literary pleasure in the study of an artist's life and work, I can but hope that this little book may prove of some slight use in awakening a deeper interest in the creations of one of the first and greatest of Italian painters.

I must acknowledge my deep indebtedness to Mr. Bernhard Berenson for much invaluable assistance during the writing of this work.

F. M. P.

SIENA, 1900.



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Ille ego sum, per quam pictura extinta revixit,
Cui quam recta manus, tam fuit et facilis.
Naturae deerat nostrae quod defuit arti:
Plus licuit nulli pingere, nec melius.
Miraris turrim egregiam sacro aere sonantem?
Haec quoque de modulo crevit ad astra meo.
Denique sum Iottus, quid opus fuit illa referre?
Hoc nomen longi carminis instar erit.

ANGELO POLIZIANO.

# GIOTTO

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

THERE are few characters of any real importance in the history of Italian art, concerning whom we possess less certain or genuine information than we do in regard to Giotto di Bondone.

Notwithstanding the fame and celebrity that have been universally accorded him as one of the greatest and most striking personalities in the artistic annals of the Christian world, we are left to found our ideas of his private life and of his career as an artist, almost entirely upon tradition, and such of his works as have been spared us through the centuries that have elapsed since he laid aside his brush.

As to authentic notices concerning his life and work, we have been bequeathed the unsatisfactory legacy of a few scattered documents, which afford no further enlightenment than to establish one or two relatively unimportant dates connected with certain periods of his artistic activity—records mostly of an official or legal nature, and which cast no light whatever upon the personality of the man himself.

In attempting, therefore, to construct anything ap-

proaching an ordered or probable account of his life, we are forced to fall back almost entirely upon such internal evidence as we may gather from his works, the narratives of his earlier biographers being too mixed with the qualities of error and imagination to be of any real service to us.

Under such circumstances, it is easily apparent that the most conscientious and well-meaning attempt in this direction can lay claim to nothing beyond a certain appearance of probability, so far must the elements of conjecture and uncertainty enter into every endeavour to put together a connected story of his life.

As to a review of his career as an artist, however, we are less devoid of substantial material for study, and the remains of his artistic activity, ruined and repainted as in the majority of cases they are, at least enable us, by means of a careful and unbiassed critical examination, to trace to a certain extent the progress and development of his extraordinary genius.

Much has been written regarding Giotto and his works, both of late years and in earlier times, but even at the present day the ideas of the majority of art students—not to mention full-fledged critics and historians—concerning him, both as a man and as a painter, are almost directly, if at the same time unconsciously, dependent upon the well-known biography of Giorgio Vasari, the famous chronicler of the sixteenth century.

Vasari's monograph is, in more ways than one, an exceedingly interesting creation, and especially characteristic of certain phases of that writer's peculiar talents. With the exception of his "Life of Cimabue," it would be difficult to find a more elaborate and, at the

same time, a more inconsistent piece of work throughout the entire series of biographical sketches that go to make up his famous book.

How much of the narrative in question is due to Vasari's own imagination, and how much to the writings of the different authors upon whom he drew for the foundation of so many of his "Lives," it is difficult to say. Perhaps the honours are equally divided in this respect—certain it is that large demands were made upon Vasari's fertile invention for the means of knitting together the long account of Giotto's works, and of his endless artistic wanderings, with which he fills so many pages.

It is in his capacity as a critic, however, that our faith is most shaken; and, in his promiscuous attributions to Giotto of works having little or nothing in common with that painter's own particular style, and often differing greatly among themselves, we are forced to wonder at his strange lack of critical sense in accepting, unhesitatingly, the oft-times ignorant and untenable attributions and opinions of his predecessors and contemporaries.

Nevertheless, despite its various chronological errors and inexcusable critical mistakes, Vasari's biography is worthy of our careful consideration as being the first really comprehensive attempt at compiling a detailed account of Giotto's life, together with a description of his works. Although, as we have already said, it is at times difficult to detect the historian's own imaginative additions to the story of the great painter's career, as he gathered it from the writings of the authors who preceded him, we can upon the whole trust to him as more or less

faithfully recording the traditions current in his day, at least as far as the more important features of his narrative are concerned; and it is in this respect, rather than as a critical commentary, that his work has for us its greatest value.

Such writers and students as Baldinucci, Lanzi, Bottari—and, at a later period, Milanesi and Crowe and Cavalcaselle—did much to correct a great part of Vasari's errors and mis-statements, as well as to clear up many uncertain points in regard to Giotto's life; but, with the exception of the last-named authors, their work partook rather more of an historical and archivistic, than of a critical, nature.

Crowe and Cavalcaselle's life of the master, in the first part of their monumental work on the painting of Italy, despite various critical shortcomings, remains, as a whole, the most authoritative that has yet been given us, and one destined to hold a foremost place in the list of works concerning Giotto and his school.

The various contributions to the subject on the part of that greatest of all writers on art, John Ruskin, are too well known to the majority of readers to require more than a passing mention here. Nevertheless, great as Ruskin is in his ethical and æsthetic consideration of Giotto's work, he is lacking as a critic in the modern technical sense of the word, and in this respect he has taught us little in regard to the painting of that master.

To a later and more purely scientific school of criticism, belongs Mr. Bernhard Berenson's invaluable little book on the Florentine Painters of the Renaissance, and to him is due the first really careful and discriminating catalogue of Giotto's works as we know them to-day.

Perhaps no personality exists in the artistic annals of Europe, a true appreciation of whose work and influences depends more deeply on a thorough knowledge of his predecessors and contemporaries, than is the case with Giotto himself. And yet, despite the comparatively generous quantity of literature that exists at the present day regarding him, no single volume has, to the best of our knowledge, yet appeared upon the subject, that can be said to combine the double purpose of a biographical sketch and a critical guide-book, and certainly none in which a notice of the master's life has been preceded by any concise examination of the art that anticipated his own.

It is not without a just claim to the title, that Giotto has been proclaimed the first of modern painters; but we must not allow this laudatory qualification to blind us to the fact that, however great his individual genius may have been—and it is certain that the history of art holds in its lists few names that rank as his in this respect—it would be both erroneous and unjust to deny that he was as much the culminating figure of a movement long on foot in France and Italy, as he was an absolutely original innovator. What he did for the art of Painting, others had accomplished, years before his time, for that of Sculpture; and to pass over in silence these pioneers of the artistic *renaissance* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—men to whom the real foundation of what is known as modern art was in so great a measure due—would be to convey a false, or at best an imperfect, impression of Giotto's real position as a reformer.

In the preparation of this little volume, for a series

intended to supply the public with a number of handbooks of a critical as well as of an historical character, it was originally our desire to preface our study of Giotto with an essay upon the earlier mediæval art of Europe. Unfortunately, we have been able but partially to carry out our wishes in this direction, and circumstances have obliged us to abandon our original design. The limits of the present little work have rendered it impossible for us to enter into anything resembling a detailed or adequate delineation of the artistic progress and development of Italy during the centuries previous to Giotto's birth ; nor has it been possible for us to follow, in its varied phases, the unique struggle for supremacy between the two great conflicting elements of Latin and Byzantine art, into a record of which the history of painting in that country, from the seventh century onwards, must inevitably resolve itself.

The twelfth century, however, marks the beginning of a new epoch in the moral and intellectual history of Western Europe—an epoch the revolutionary character of which is unmistakable. An account of the great struggle for individual assertion, brought about by the inevitable reaction against the conventionalities of the later Middle Ages, would again occupy too many pages to find a place here. It belongs rather more to the religious and political, than to the artistic, history of Europe. Nevertheless, the two are inseparably connected, and, as has ever been the case, such a movement could not fail to influence, almost at once, the outward spiritual expressions of the people it affected, as manifested in their art and literature. So far as Italy herself was concerned, this deep inner change may be said to have found its

most remarkable exponent in Francis of Assisi, than whom we can bring to mind no more typical a personification of the new spirit of this extraordinary age. The far-reaching influences of this great saint's life and teachings were by no means limited to a merely religious character, and their after-results became distinctly visible, at a period but shortly removed from his death, in the art and literature of what may truly be said to constitute the commencement of the *real* Renaissance in Italy. Niccolo and Giovanni Pisano in the field of sculpture, Dante Alighieri in that of literature, Giotto di Bondone in the world of painting, all were but culminating figures in this same strong and irresistible movement toward an inner change in the moral and intellectual life of Western Europe—toward an emancipation of individual thought and feeling, and a return to more natural, simple, and life-giving models than those of mere convention.

It is not to Painting, however, but to her elder sister, Sculpture, that we must look for the first really important advance toward the practical realization of the new ideals that were stirring in the minds of the artists of Italy.

Already, in the beginning of the twelfth century, we meet with symptoms of an inward change in the spirit of the work turned out by the sculptors of Northern Italy and Tuscany—mere signs, it is true, hidden behind the veil of technical awkwardness and incapacity, but nevertheless sufficiently obvious to denote the growing change of ideals, and the ever-increasing restlessness on the part of the craftsman, beneath the yoke of conventionality which, both here and in the East, had

so long borne down and suppressed the individual expression of his ideas.

The towns of Northern Italy are thickly strewn with examples of this struggling art, at times barbaric in its grotesque crudity, at others less so, but never once reaching a sufficient technical perfection or excellence to allow the artist fully to realize his inner dreams and ideals.

To Niccolo Pisano belongs, undoubtedly, the credit of the first effective step in this great mutation. His sudden appearance upon the artistic horizon of Italy may well seem to the generality of readers a matter for no small wonderment; but a more careful consideration of the contemporary history of the period will lead them to look upon it as far less casual and unprepared an event than is generally supposed. The causes which tended to make it possible were manifold, and Niccolo was but the natural product of an age ripe for the practical embodiment of its new ideas. What he did for the artistic future of his country, was done, perhaps, in total unconsciousness on his part of the importance of the step, and of its wide-reaching after-results; but his struggle against the conventionalities of his day was none the less sincere and heart-felt on this account, nor his final victory less complete. And yet, however great a figure in the artistic annals of his country, Niccolo must certainly appear to the careful student of his work, far more as one gifted with unusual powers of appreciative selection, than as a really extraordinary or original innovator. His genius was not such as to allow of his solving the problem at once and alone, or of passing with a single step from the observance of time-worn

models to the imitation of Nature herself. The revolution which he effected was due rather to an appeal to her through intermediary means, and took the form of a direct return to better and purer models than those which had been for so long held up to the emulation of the Latin and Byzantine schools. It is precisely here that so many of his biographers, in their anxiety to attribute to him the entire glory of the reformation of Italian art, have exaggerated his real merits as an inventor, and misunderstood the true nature of his reforms.

We are accustomed to hear the now famous pulpit of the Baptistery at Pisa—Niccolo's earliest known work—quoted almost invariably, as being not only the greatest and most representative creation of the master's genius, but as the first important product of what has been termed the "Modern Age" of Italian art. This statement, repeated by so many writers on the subject of Niccolo and his school, is a distortion of the actual truth.

If we examine carefully the style and manner of the Pisan pulpit, we cannot fail to become convinced that the reforms and innovations which Niccolo here introduced into his work were almost entirely of a technical nature, and hardly destined to leave any really permanent inward impressions upon the art that followed later. The artist has here, it is true, passed at a single step from the technical deficiencies of his contemporaries to a far higher plane of excellence in this direction, but we seek in vain for any really essential improvement upon the inner spiritual conceptions of the Byzantine and Latin artists of the time.

In clothing his subjects and characters with the outward forms of the Græco-Roman art of classic times, Niccolo was but unconsciously returning to the example of the early Christian artists of Rome. The entire Pisan pulpit, as far as its sculptural decorations are concerned, is no more than a faithful study of Roman bas-reliefs, and there is nothing in its inner contents to characterize it in any way as a work of Christian art, beyond the mere subjects themselves. This absolute return to the neo-classic models of ancient Roman times was, as it were, an unwitting experiment on Niccolo's part, and as such was not without a distinctly beneficial influence upon the sculpture of the day. The master himself, however, seems to have been among the first to recognize the limits of its success, and to acknowledge the unsuitability of the newly resurrected forms to a satisfactory representation of his own Christian ideals. A glance at the great pulpit in the Cathedral of Siena—his second work of importance, executed but a few years after the one at Pisa—will suffice to prove the truth of this supposition.

Although still adhering, in part, to some of the outward forms of his earlier classic models, we find an absolute inward change in the style of the work at Siena—a change due to the presence of an entirely new spirit in the master's manner. Side by side with types recalling, almost directly, the conventional ones of the Roman reliefs, we find others that appear to us quite new—the counterparts of which we may seek for in vain in the rest of the Italian art of the period. These fresh forms seem based upon a more or less direct study of natural models; there is in them none of the conven-

tionality of the art of the time; and in movement and expression, drapery and form, they seem possessed of an individuality and naturalism, that strike us at once as unprecedented in the entire range of the Byzantine and Latin art of the previous centuries.

As we examine this work—so unlike anything that had preceded it in the art of Italy, and so different in spirit from the earlier work of Niccolo himself—we are inclined to seek the source of the new naturalistic influences that had evidently had so great a share in the sudden change. That the transformation was entirely due to Niccolo's personal creative genius, is hardly to be credited for an instant—that the influence came from Italy, or the East, is equally out of the question. There remains, therefore, but one solution to the problem, and we must turn to the North for an answer to our questions—and it is precisely from this direction that these new influences arose.

A really satisfactory study of the Gothic sculpture of France, and of its influences upon the art of the South, remains to be made and written. There are few epochs in the history of the world's art which afford us a greater or a more surprising example of the visible outward expression of a nation's thought and spiritual development, than does this marvellous efflorescence of sculpture in the North of Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. One of the earliest, and at the same time one of the most characteristic, manifestations of that same widespread intellectual and moral awakening which we have already spoken of as having made itself felt in Italy, the sudden appearance of this great school of French sculptors stamps it as unique in comparison with

the slower and more gradual development of the Southern schools.

Of far greater importance, however, than this rapidity of rise and growth, was the creative originality of its artists. The types and forms which we meet at Paris, Chartres, Amiens, Strassburg, and a dozen other cathedral towns of France and South-Western Germany, appear to us as belonging to an absolutely new school of art, and due no longer, as was the case in Italy and the Orient, to the study and re-casting of conventional and worn-out models, but to an almost direct reversion to that greatest of all teachers, Nature herself. We feel instinctively the presence of a new and life-giving element in the freedom and individuality of thought which shows itself in these new creations of the Northern workmen. For the first time in centuries, we meet with a style that is at once both natural and free; and the humanizing spirit which runs through the work of these nameless French sculptors, brings their art at once into a far more intimate relation with ourselves than was the case with any that had gone before it. We are conscious of new feelings of sympathy and attraction, such as the older art of Rome and Byzantium had been powerless to awaken in us. Its freshness and simplicity strike us as a healthy and welcome change from the eternally repeated forms of the South and of the East, and, to our modern taste and judgment, this new style appeals at once as a far more human and natural embodiment of our own ideals of Christian art than any in the entire previous history of sculpture or of painting.

Nor was it merely in its inner spiritual qualities that this new Gothic sculpture showed so distinct a departure

from the work of Italy and the Orient ; for we find in it a technical perfection of form and workmanship that must appear as little less than marvellous in comparison with the relative degeneracy of the Italo-Byzantine schools.

That an art possessing such qualities of freshness and originality should have withheld its invigorating influence for so long a time from the near-lying sister country of Italy, is as surprising as it is unaccountable. Niccolo Pisano seems to have been the first Italian artist of importance to feel its effects. How, and at what exact period of his life, he first came in contact with the creations of the Northern workmen, it is difficult to say. His early recognition of the unsuitability of the pseudo-classic style adopted by him in the Pisan pulpit, to the expression of his innate Christian ideals, may have led him to look about for other and more adaptable models. In the work of the Gothic sculptors he would certainly have found what was at least the partial realization of his dreams ; and although diversity of nature and education might have prevented his adoption of the new forms in their entirety and at once, their influence could not have failed to stamp itself upon his work to such an extent as to effect a thorough, though gradual, change in his style and manner. However this may have been, the great pulpit of Siena is a standing proof of the sudden alteration of his art, and may well be looked upon as the turning-point of his own career, as well as of the artistic history of his country.

What time may have done for Niccolo in the assimilation of the new Gothic spirit of naturalism and artistic freedom of thought, as well as in the development of

his own individual powers, we cannot definitely ascertain, for the reason that the work of his later years is too vaguely commingled with that of his son Giovanni, and of various other assistants, to give us any really exact idea of his own share in it. The great public fountain at Perugia, the last existing work upon which we know the master to have been engaged, bears the names of both father and son. Whatever may have been Niccolo's own direct share in it, this work shows us the complete realization of that new style, the germs of which are so visible at Siena. The conventional stiffness of the Pisan pulpit and the hybrid qualities of the one at Siena, have here entirely disappeared, and we find ourselves in possession of forms as free and natural as those of Giotto himself; forms which bespeak the final and absolute emancipation of the artist from the classic and Byzantine traditions that had for so long governed the art of Italy.

In his son Giovanni, and in another of his pupils, the Florentine, Arnolfo, Niccolo left behind him two successors who were destined worthily to carry on and perfect the work which he had himself begun. Through Giovanni, more especially, the fame of the Pisan school rose to a renown that eclipsed even that of Niccolo, and it is in the works of this younger sculptor that those traits of humanity and individual expression, which had already begun so strongly to characterize the work of Niccolo's later years, reach a point of previously unequalled development.

Giovanni's great natural gifts, his deep dramatic sense, and his careful study of natural models, stood him in good stead for the furtherance of the new ideals of his school.

Of a temperament markedly different from his father's, he replaced the calm sedateness of Niccolo's style with a restless energy of expression that became a leading characteristic of his work; and he seems nowhere more at home than in the depicting of subjects calling for animated dramatic treatment. The passionate action of his figures is exaggerated at times into a positive violence, verging upon a fault. With this overflow of vitality, however, was united a sanity of conception, a simplicity of style, and an appreciation of natural and human sentiment, that brought his work into a greater affinity with the spirit of the Gothic schools of the North than had ever been the case with that of Niccolo. Nevertheless, this approach to the feeling of the Northern sculptors was not arrived at through any loss of individuality on Giovanni's own part, but, on the contrary, we find a constantly increasing quality of originality in his work, which stamps it as deserving of the respect due to an independent school of art, reaching its climax, at a late period, in the still more perfect creations of his successor, Andrea da Pontedera—better known as Andrea Pisano—regarding whose personality and work we will have more to say in another place.

Notwithstanding the innovations which they had introduced, the influence of Niccolo and his earlier followers upon the painting of their time was, strange to say, for years an absolutely imperceptible one. Even in their native Tuscany, the pictorial arts continued to lead an entirely separate existence from that of their sister, sculpture; and their sudden revival during the latter half of the thirteenth century, the entire credit of which has traditionally been laid at the feet of that mysterious

personage, Cimabue, was due in no way to the influence of the Pisan school of sculptors, but entirely to the resurrection of better Latin and Byzantine models than had hitherto been in use.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FORERUNNERS OF GIOTTO

IN the history of her painting, Tuscany does not greatly differ from certain other provinces of Central and Northern Italy. In comparison with Rome, she cannot be said to have possessed anything deserving the title of a native school of painters until at a relatively late period. Such primitive efforts as were turned out by her craftsmen during the earlier Middle Ages, were hardly to be distinguished by the appellation of works of art; and the first paintings of any real importance which we find in this part of the country appear to differ in no essential way from the generality of work produced in the other parts of Central Italy—the usual compound of Latin and Byzantine forms, with a sufficient tinge of native crudity, to lend, at times, an air of local originality to the whole. Such painters as Margaritone of Arezzo and Giunta Pisano have given us in their works an excellent idea of the state of painting in Tuscany at the time of Niccolo's appearance upon the scene, and the absolute imperviousness of the workmen of their school to all new outward and natural influences, clearly shows the set and mechanical conventionality of their craft.

The marked improvement which we have alluded to above, as having been effected through the Florentine artists during the last decades of the thirteenth century,

did much to advance the state of painting in these parts toward something resembling the artistic standards of Rome. Nevertheless, this progressive movement has been exaggerated by various historians into something far beyond its real importance. Among other things due to their writings, the public has been taught for years to look upon the mural decorations of the upper church of San Francesco, at Assisi, as the unquestionable products of these same Florentine or Tuscan artists. As to ourselves, we are unable to discover any palpable grounds beyond those of mere tradition in support of this generally accepted theory, and we must look in vain for any really conclusive critical reasons for its maintenance.

With the exception of the frescoed church of San Pietro in Grado, near Pisa,—the decorations of which building belong to a period preceding by many years those at Assisi—the mosaics of the baptistery at Florence, and one or two less extensive works in Lucca and in Pisa, we do not find, throughout all Tuscany, a single important existing example of mural decoration that can, for a moment, suffer a comparison with the great works of the Roman school; and certainly none that would in any way support the prevalent opinion which gives to Cimabue and his assistants the entire credit of a series of works that rank as the most powerful and perfect that Christian art had produced up to the time.

Apart from the great series of frescoes relating to the life of the saint to whom the church is dedicated, and attributed by common consent to Giotto—works which do not in any way bear upon our present examination of the older decorations of the edifice—the walls and ceil-

ings of San Francesco are entirely covered with scenes from the Old and New Testaments, with figures of angels and saints, and with various minor decorative ornaments. Painted for the greater part, in all probability, between 1250 and 1290, at a time when the Roman schools were enjoying an exceptional period of prosperity, these frescoes possess far more in common with the paintings and mosaics of that capital city than with anything that the artists of Florence and Tuscany have to show us during the same period. Although the Byzantine element is preponderant in the majority of them, others of these paintings show marked characteristics of the more purely Latin school, and there is a sufficient visible diversity of style to prove to us that a goodly number of different artists were engaged, during a lengthy period, upon the adornment of the building.

We meet with no works, in the entire range of the earlier mediæval painting of Italy, that can be said to surpass, or even to equal, in dramatic force and expression, the greater part of these frescoes at Assisi; and yet, superior as they are in these respects, they mark no essential departure from the usual style and manner of the Italo-Byzantine school. The same binding conventions that had fettered the free expression of the artists' ideas and individuality through so many long centuries, are still in full force here, and although we may be led to perceive, in many of these works, a certain apparent appreciation and study of nature and natural models which strike us as exceptional, it is, at its best, but a passing and unsatisfied attempt on the part of the painter to realize those new, though vaguely defined, ideals that were day by day unconsciously developing themselves

within him, and which had already borne such fruit in the work of Niccolo of Pisa.

Enough has already been written concerning these paintings to prove the futility of any attempt to classify, or even to discover, their real authors; and we shall not here add to the confusion of ideas already existing in regard to them. We may do far better, for the present, by leaving this question of derivation and authorship to a future satisfactory solution on the part of some one of the many critics who are constantly occupying themselves with it, and by remaining content with the knowledge that, even as they now exist—mutilated and repainted, and in part entirely washed away—these frescoes still represent to us the greatest existing examples of pre-Giottesque art in Italy. With them the Italo-Byzantine school of the West may be said to have reached the limits of its possibilities, and the artists of the time seem themselves to have partially, though unconsciously, recognized this fact.

The realistic tendencies and attempts at a more naturalistic style, which we have already noticed in these paintings at Assisi, were by no means without their counterparts, in a less degree, at Rome and in other parts of the peninsula. The growing dissatisfaction with the old-established forms, and their absolute unsuitability as a medium of expression for the constantly increasing naturalistic inclinations of the age, was made manifest in the numerous unsuccessful efforts on the part of various painters throughout the country, to infuse a more realistic and life-giving element into the conventional art of the time. Latin and Byzantine painting had become too steeped in the spirit of formality and repetition, however, to allow of its successful transformation into a

naturalistic art, and the technical style of the ancient schools was in itself sufficiently opposed to the introduction of any such realistic innovations, as to render their satisfactory development an impossibility. Nevertheless, the artists of Italy continued unceasing in their efforts to adapt the time-worn forms to the expression of their new ideals, loth to abandon the ancient traditions, and yet unable to endow them with the life and animation that their inward artistic aspirations longed so to express. Had they but looked beyond themselves, they might have seen the way lying open to the fulfilment of their desires, in the example of the Gothic sculptors of the North, and of Niccolo of Pisa ; but they were too deeply sunk in the hereditary spirit of convention common to their schools, to feel the force of these distant influences. The time was ripe for a vital and imperative change, and yet no spirit had arisen, sufficiently gifted with the qualities of perception and originality, to head the movement toward the necessary transformation, or even to bring the painters of the period to a clearer understanding of their own half-conscious ideals.

How long the painting of Italy might have remained in this restless and critical state, had it not been for the sudden appearance of one of the greatest minds that have ever been connected with the history of art, it is difficult to say or think. In Giotto it found the long-awaited liberator ; and the wonderful transformation which he effected was as sudden and complete as it had been long deferred. What Giotto was as a man and as an artist, and in what lay the nature of the great changes which he brought about, it will be our effort to show in the following pages.

## CHAPTER III

### GIOTTO'S EARLY YEARS

GIOTTO DI BONDONE was born at Colle, a little village belonging to the Commune of Vespignano in the beautiful valley of the Mugello, not many miles to the north of Florence.

No authenticated evidence has been handed down to us regarding the exact date of his birth, a fact which has given rise to various discussions and conjectures on the part of art-historians, for the past two centuries, as to the most probable year in which that important event took place.

Vasari, upon some unknown authority, places the date at 1276. Certain outward evidence of later periods in the artist's life, however—as, for instance, the fact of his having been intrusted at Rome, as early as 1298, or even before that time, with works of such importance as the famous mosaic of the "Navicella" and the high-altar piece of St. Peter's—leads us to doubt the accuracy of that writer's statement.

We are hardly inclined to believe that even one of Giotto's exceptional genius could have risen, at the early age of twenty-one, to such fame and pre-eminence in his art, as to have insured his being chosen in preference to all the artists of Italy to fulfil such important commissions as those we have just mentioned. Probabilities

are certainly against the supposition that a mere youth, however talented, should suddenly have been elevated to a position above the heads of the foremost painters and mosaic-workers of the day, many of whom, greatly his seniors in age, had long before acquired a firmly established reputation throughout all Italy as the greatest living masters of their respective arts.

We have the further testimony of no less an authority than Antonio Pucci, in support of the opinion that Giotto was born at an earlier period than is generally believed to have been the case. This writer tells us in his "Centiloquio"—which work is but a rhymed paraphrase of Giovanni Villani's "Chronicle"—that the great painter died on the eighth of January, 1336 (according to the old Florentine method of reckoning), at seventy years of age. The statement of Pucci, who, together with Villani, was a contemporary, and undoubtedly a personal acquaintance, if not a friend, of Giotto, certainly lays claim to a greater degree of credibility than the assertion of a writer living some two centuries later, and we may reasonably place the actual year of Giotto's birth somewhere between 1265 and 1270.

Of his boyhood and early life we know virtually nothing, beyond the fact that he was by no means born in the poor and humble circumstances represented to us by so many of his biographers. That his father was something more than a poverty-stricken day-labourer is proved to us by a document of the year 1320,[1] in which Giotto is mentioned as being the son of a certain Francesco Bondone of Vespignano, to all appearances,

[1] Quoted by Leopoldo del Migliore in that writer's MS. notes on Vasari, now preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale at Florence.

judging from the contents of the document in question, a well-to-do landed proprietor, who is spoken of as *vir præclarus*, a title never given either to labourers or peasants, both of whom are invariably designated in all official documents of the time as *laboratores terrarum*.

Even tradition seems to have kept a comparative silence regarding the painter's early childhood, and it is only at a period long after his death that we come upon certain legends in which his name is associated with that of Cimabue, in the relationship of pupil and master.

It is through Dante Alighieri that we first hear of the painter Cimabue in the now famous lines:

> Credette Cimabue nella pintura
> Tener lo campo, ed ora ha Giotto il grido,
> Si che la fama di colui oscura.

This is, perhaps, praise enough, just and sufficient, but it is chiefly to the writings of Vasari and others, at a much later period, that Cimabue—or Cenni di Pepo, as he was properly called—owes his present fame.

Ghiberti mentions him simply as a follower of the "Greek" manner of painting. Filippo Villani and, later on, Cristoforo Landini, were among the first to speak of him as the "regenerator of the art of painting," and the founder of a new school, at a period sufficiently remote from his own lifetime to lend an air of inventive originality to their remarks. To Francesco Albertini we are indebted for the first imaginative catalogue of his works, together with those of his would-be pupil Giotto.

To all of these writers, and to the anonymous compiler of a series of biographical sketches of great and famous artists—from Cimabue to Michelangelo, still preserved

in MS. form at Florence[1]—Vasari is under strict obligations for the main statements in his eulogistic "Life of Cimabue."

Vasari's narrative is an astonishing combination of half-truths, historical misrepresentations, and lack of critical judgment. In his enumeration of Cimabue's supposed works, he seems to be entirely devoid of any set criterion whatever in regard to the paintings of this earlier period of Italian art, and, following in the footsteps of Albertini, sets down to the glory of Cimabue, as the creator of a new school, a promiscuous series of works having, in the majority of cases, naught in common beyond a general air of antiquity and Byzantinism. The one prevalent idea in Vasari's mind—as was the case with so many of his compatriots—seems to have been to give to Florence, at any cost, the entire honour and glory of the reformation of mediæval painting, and, as far as outward results have been concerned, he seems to have attained the fulfilment of his desires, for Cimabue has been passed down to us in the full light of his making.

Summarily, it may safely be said that Vasari's biography of this painter is, on the whole, the most untrustworthy and incorrect of all his "Lives"; and we cannot do better than lay it aside as a compilation in the main dependent upon the invention of its author and a few other sixteenth-century writers, whose imaginative faculties were often stronger than their love of facts, and whose critical judgment, literally speaking, was worth nothing. As in the case of his "Life of Giotto," this biography of Vasari can have, therefore, little value for the student, beyond affording him a general view of the

[1] Biblioteca Nazionale.

various traditions which were afloat in that author's day regarding the misty personality of Cimabue.

We have little reason to doubt that Dante's words of praise were, to a certain extent, justified, or that Cimabue was, at a certain period of his life, really in the possession of a celebrity beyond that enjoyed by the majority of his contemporaries. At the same time, the poet's lines do not by any means exclude the existence of other well-known artists during this period of Italian art-history, and modern criticism has given us good reason to believe, furthermore, that his words were more especially applied to the painting of Tuscany than to that of other parts of the peninsula. Again, even Dante Alighieri was himself at times not entirely free from a certain *Chauvinisme*, and his quotation of Cimabue, as having "held the field of painting" before Giotto's time, may have been in a measure prompted by a certain very natural, and perhaps excusable, local patriotism.

What Dante's gifts as an art-critic may have been, we do not exactly know, but it seems almost certain that he must, at the time, have been acquainted with the creations of the great school of painters and mosaic-workers at Rome—works which show a far higher standard of artistic excellence than any of the various paintings that can, with any reasonable probability, be attributed to Cimabue or his contemporaries of the Florentine school.

As to the frescoes in the Upper Church at Assisi, we have already expressed our opinion in another place. The real authorship of these works, which would certainly establish Cimabue as the greatest painter before Giotto's day, could their attribution to him be but

proven, unfortunately remains too doubtful a question to admit of any very probable or satisfactory solution. Still another work, and one that has perhaps contributed more than any other toward the building up of Cimabue's extraordinary fame—the great Madonna of the Rucellai Chapel, in the church of Sta. Maria Novella at Florence—is now admitted, by more than one serious critic, to be a direct production of the school of Duccio of Siena,[1] and not a Florentine work at all.

Such other works as remain in the list of paintings traditionally attributed to Cimabue, although in one or two cases decidedly superior to the average Tuscan painting of the time, are scarcely of a nature to confirm the usual exaggerated opinions of his greatness as an innovator; and in the present lack of all decisive proof concerning his life and works he must become to us an almost mythical character—one to be considered as a *type* representative of that artistic progress and advance which we know to have taken place in Florentine art during the latter half of the thirteenth century, rather than as any strictly defined personality. Tradition may have been right in considering him the regenerating spirit of painting in Tuscany, and in attributing to him such works as the Madonna in the Academy at Florence; but such examples are insufficient in themselves to make good his claim to the position of the greatest painter

[1] That Duccio himself was commissioned to paint a picture of the Virgin for the above-mentioned church, in the year 1285, is a fact worthy of remark, proved by recently discovered documental evidence. Whether the Rucellai altar-piece be the work furnished in fulfilment of this commission, it is impossible to state; the impress of Duccio's school is, however, sufficiently evident in this painting to be unmistakable.

of his day. Until, therefore, some fortunate critic can come forward with more satisfactory arguments than those which have heretofore been offered us in defence of Cimabue's asserted greatness and superiority over the other artists of his time, or until some documents are brought to light proving to us his rights to the authorship of the frescoes at Assisi, we cannot share the popular opinion regarding this most vaguely defined of painters, and he must remain to us an unsolved problem in the art-history of his century.

Time seems to have dealt exceptionally severely with such of Giotto's youthful works as might have furnished us a means of judging more correctly of his early education, and of the gradual formation of his style. With the possible exception of two or three small panel paintings, which have of late years been attributed by Mr. Bernhard Berenson to this early stage of the master's professional activity, we cannot boast of possessing a single work of this particular period in Italian art that can be said to show any characteristics in common with Giotto's style as we are wont to know it. Nevertheless, no artist, however gifted, could possibly have arrived at the comparative perfection evinced by the master in his earlier creations at Rome and at Assisi without having passed through a long stage of preparatory study and development, and we are not inclined to believe that Giotto stepped at once into the possession of such a style without having left behind him some material evidence of his early studies. Such evidence, had it been preserved, would have been sufficient to have made clear to us the truth concerning his early artistic education, as well as the real merits of his masters and the different

influences brought to bear upon him as a youth. Unfortunately, almost every trace of his earliest activity as a painter has been lost, and, despite the persistent attempts of various modern critics—mostly of the German school—to persuade us to see the entire course of Giotto's early education mapped out before us in the older frescoes of the Upper Church at Assisi, we must reluctantly dismiss all present hope of becoming acquainted with the real facts regarding his earlier development.

Probabilities certainly tend, however, toward the acceptance of the usual tradition that Giotto was, at one time in his life, a pupil of Cimabue, or of some one of that painter's Florentine contemporaries. How long he may have continued under the influence of these Tuscan masters, and to what extent he may have been indebted to them in the formation of his later manner, it is—in the absence of all certain knowledge concerning the painters in question and this particular period of his own life—futile to conjecture. It is hardly probable that one gifted with his restless spirit of progress and advance should have remained long satisfied with the comparatively narrow artistic education that Florence was able to afford, and there is every likelihood of his having visited both Rome and Assisi at an early period of his career, either in the company of Cimabue or some other such artist. A journey to Assisi—where the great church of S. Francesco, but recently completed, was already acquiring a widespread fame as a treasure-house of art—would almost of necessity have led in time to a visit to the not far distant papal capital, still, in Giotto's day, the artistic centre of the Occident—the Jerusalem of every serious artistic pilgrimage.

The art of Rome, however,—as had been the case with the apparently far less important art of Florence—was, even at its grandest and best, too hampered and conventional to teach Giotto more than it had taught his predecessors. The young painter's exceptional genius must soon have exhausted the possibilities of both schools, and arrived, at an early period, at the limit of their capacity for further development. A mind such as his could not have remained long blinded to the differences that lay between this conventional and limited art and the new and unfettered one of Giovanni Pisano and his followers; nor could it have failed to recognize and appreciate the causes that went to make up this great diversity. The advance made by the Pisan stone-cutters must have appealed to Giotto as applicable to his own case. Instinctively he must have felt that the realization of his artistic ideals lay beyond the pale of the pictorial traditions of the time, and was to be arrived at only through a radical departure from the conventions of his predecessors and contemporaries, and a bold entry upon a new and untrodden path in the field of painting. To one of his peculiar temperament thought was equivalent to action, and his genius carried him at once beyond the barrier that had served to stay the progress of so many lesser men in the same struggle for freedom of expression. With naught else but Nature as his prototype, he was enabled to create, almost at once, such forms as were perfectly suited to the expression of his ideas, and he suddenly stands before us, in the earliest works that can with any security be attributed to his hand, as a master already possessed of an entirely free and independent style, having nothing in common

with the productions of his contemporaries beyond a few relatively insignificant technical details.

To how great an extent the example of the sculptors of Pisa and of the North may have affected Giotto in this decisive change, it is impossible to say. Certain it is, however, that to Giovanni, if to no other of his school, Giotto owed no small debt in the formation of his style. The effect of Giovanni's work upon the painter's artistic development was an undeniable and a potent one, and, as far as he may be said to have had any real teacher beyond Nature herself, Giovanni Pisano was certainly the artist whose creations exercised the greatest influence upon the moulding of his manner.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIRST WORKS OF GIOTTO

BOTH Ghiberti and Vasari tell us that Giotto's first independent works were painted for the church of the Badia in Florence, and the latter writer dwells at length upon the powerful expressiveness of an *Annunciation of the Virgin* (evidently a fresco) in the "chapel of the high-altar" of that church. He also mentions a panel-picture on the high-altar itself, which was still to be seen in its original place in Vasari's own day, it being kept there "more on account of a certain reverence for the work of so great a man as Giotto, than for any other reason."

These two paintings have, however, long since disappeared, and with them all traces of whatever other works Giotto may have executed in this city of his adoption during these earlier years of his career. It is not to Florence, therefore, but to Rome, that we must look for the first existing proofs of his activity as an independent master; and we fortunately possess some slight yet precious documentary evidence regarding at least two of the various works which he is said to have carried out in this latter city during the pontificate of Boniface VIII.

According to existing notices preserved in the archives of the Vatican, we learn that Giotto received important

commissions, during the last years of the thirteenth century, from Cardinal Giacomo Gaetani de' Stefaneschi, nephew of Pope Boniface, and a prelate of no small influence in the clerical world of his day. The notices in question were first made public by Baldinucci, who came upon them in a work entitled "Il Martirologio," which quotes in turn the older authority of the "Necrologium," preserved in the same collection of archives. This "Necrologium" is an ancient record containing obituary notices of various prelates connected with the Vatican, who, in the course of their lives, had shown themselves to be special benefactors of the Church. Among them is a laudatory one concerning Cardinal Stefaneschi, who was to all appearances a warm lover and generous patron of the Fine Arts, and whose various artistic donations to the Church are here set forth at length. Together with other works which he caused to be executed for the embellishment of the basilica of St. Peter, two are distinctly mentioned as being by the hand of Giotto—a wooden *ciborium* or altar-piece, for the high-altar of the church, and a mosaic representing Christ saving St. Peter from the waves. According to this same notice, Giotto was paid 800 golden florins for the *ciborium*, and no less than 2,200 for the mosaic. The "Necrologium" does not state the exact date of either of these works, but the "Martirologio" says definitely that the mosaic was commissioned and executed in the year 1298. Upon what exact authority this statement is made, we do not know, but we may accept it as being, in all probability, correct.

Both the works spoken of above still exist at the present day, although in such varying states of pre-

servation as to render but one of them recognizable as the handiwork of the great Tuscan master. The mosaic of the "Navicella"—as it has been known since the days of Giotto—may be seen over the outer entrance to the portico or *atrium* of St. Peter's, but in so absolutely modernized a condition that nothing can be said to remain of the original beyond a general idea of its composition. The altar-piece, on the contrary, has fared less roughly, and though darkened by time and the smoke of countless ceremonies, and damaged by excessive "cleanings," it has fortunately escaped the far more ruinous effects of restoration and repaint. In it we possess the earliest authentic work left to us of the master's genius—one affording us ample means for a perfect acquaintance with his earlier individual manner, and allowing us a secure basis for the critical comparison and chronological arrangement of his later works. Originally painted for the high-altar of San Pietro, it remained for many years in this honourable position, until the destruction of the older church finally necessitated its removal; and it now hangs dismembered upon the walls of the Sagrestia dei Canonici—an almost forgotten relic of the past, as far as the generality of the public is concerned.

In form, the triptych was not unlike the "Gothic" altar-pieces of a later period, consisting of three principal panels, painted on both sides, connected and surmounted by the usual Gothic ornaments; and a predella of six smaller panels, three on either side. With the exception of two of the latter, which have disappeared, all these component parts of the original work have been preserved to the present day, and the reconstruction of the

*ciborium*, as it stood in Giotto's own time, would be an easy matter.

On one side of the central panel is painted the enthroned figure of Christ, surrounded by a double choir of angels. At the base of the throne kneels the donor Stefaneschi. On the reverse of the same panel sits St. Peter, holding in his hand his keys of office, and attended by two angels. In the foreground, to the left, St. George recommends the donor, who, clad in the dress of a deacon, holds out a model of the altar-piece itself. Opposite kneels a saint in bishop's garb, holding in his outstretched hands what appears to be a missal; behind him stands another in pontifical robes, also carrying a book—very possibly the cardinal's namesakes, James and Gaetano.

The two side panels contain representations of the crucifixion of St. Peter and the decapitation of St. Paul. On their reverse are large full-length figures of SS. Andrew and John, James the Elder and Paul.

In the apex of these panels are medallions of God the Father and of various prophets and angels; and along the lateral borders of the principal scenes, small figures of different saints.

In one of the four panels which remain of the predelle the Virgin is seated on a throne, holding the Divine Infant in her arms, attended by two angels, St. Peter and St. James. Each of the two accompanying pieces contains five full-length figures of Apostles. The fourth and last is occupied by half-lengths of SS. Peter, Stephen, and Bartholomew.

A single glance at this great altar-piece suffices to show us how far Giotto had already progressed, at this comparatively early period of his career, toward a full

realization of his artistic ideals; and we feel a sudden consciousness of standing in the presence of a work that marks a new era in the history of painting, so entirely and absolutely is it at variance with all that the Middle Ages had hitherto been able to offer. In it we recognize the creation of a painter who has succeeded in entirely emancipating himself from the pictorial traditions of his contemporaries—one who has replaced the formal conventionality of the Italo-Byzantine schools with a style that is entirely new, having naught in common with the painting of the time. We might indeed imagine a period of centuries to have intervened between the two, so great and so pronounced are the differences that separate them. In character and expression, in colour and design, Giotto's work differs essentially from all that has gone before it; and the cold and stilted forms of the Latin and Byzantine painters seem to have undergone, at his hands, a strange and unaccountable transformation into shapes that appear at once to live and to move. What was merely representative and symbolic in the painting of the mediæval schools, has suddenly given place to the expression of a living reality—what was emblematic and figurative in the one, has become actual and palpable in the other. Giotto's Christ is no longer the conventional representation of a mere idea, but the living embodiment of a fact—his angels no mere reproductions of preconceived traditions, but rational conceptions of a glorified humanity. His Virgin is no longer the preternatural being that she had gradually become in Latin and Byzantine art, but the human Mother of her divinely human Son—his saints, no longer the formal apparitions of an earlier time, but living beings like ourselves. He has *humanized*

the conventional conceptions of the older schools of painting, and imparted to his various figures such life-giving qualities of *substance* and *expression* as were only to be arrived at by a direct selection and imitation of natural and human forms. What was, to a great extent, mere pattern or design in so much of the work of the Latin and Byzantine artists, has become suddenly imbued by him with a sculptor's sense of modelling and form—and it is this sense of the *plastic* in his figures that constitutes the predominant characteristic of Giotto's art, as compared with that of his predecessors and contemporaries.

We might easily fill many pages with a lengthy dissertation upon these qualities of *Form*, and their relation to the painting of Giotto and of those who came before his time, but to do so would be mainly to repeat what has already been so well and clearly said by Mr. Berenson in his admirable little book on the Florentine Painters of the Renaissance. To quote Mr. Berenson's own words, "painting is an art which aims at giving an abiding impression of artistic reality with only two dimensions. The painter must therefore do consciously what we all do unconsciously—construct his third dimension. And he can accomplish his task only as we accomplish ours by giving tactile values to retinal impressions. His first business therefore is to rouse the tactile sense. . . . It follows that the essential in the art of painting—as distinguished from the art of colouring—is somehow to stimulate our consciousness of tactile values, so that the picture shall have at least as much power as the object represented, to appeal to our tactile imagination. It was of this power to stimulate the tactile consciousness—of

the essential, as I have ventured to call it, in the art of painting—that Giotto was supreme master." Let us, therefore, keep well in mind, during all future examinations of Giotto's works, the paramount importance of this great idea of Form—for we shall find it constantly apparent in every painting that ever left his hands.

Remembering these previous remarks, we may turn to a more careful examination of the different panels of the altarpiece, commencing with the central subject of the enthroned Christ. There is nothing in the general arrangement of this work that can be said to mark any really essential departure from similar compositions of the Italo-Byzantine school, and Giotto seems merely to have enlarged upon a motive that was already well known even before his day. With this general resemblance in distribution, however, all similarities between Giotto's creation and those of his predecessors cease; and if we turn our attention to the figures themselves, we note the presence of an absolutely new spirit both in their conception and execution. The grandly impressive figure of the Redeemer borders almost on severity in its majestic dignity of pose, but there is a calm benevolence in the expression of the face and in the quiet gesture of the hand upraised in benediction. The proportions of the body are just and noble, firmly modelled and carefully defined beneath the drapery which falls in broad and heavy folds about the limbs, in such open contrast to the minute and oft-times unmeaning lines of the Byzantine artists. Already we recognize, in this splendid figure of Christ, the naturalistic qualities that give life to all of Giotto's creations; and yet, while investing it with all those human traits and features that bring it at

once into such close sympathy with ourselves, the painter has never once lost sight of the solemn dignity proper to his divine subject. In the angels, again, we find the same development of form and broadness of drapery, as, in silent and expectant adoration, they stand or kneel on either side of their Master's throne. Astonishingly true to life is the worshipping figure of the donor: a miracle —considering the period in which it was produced—of the portrait-painter's art. In it we have one of the earliest efforts at naturalistic portraiture in the history of modern painting; and to Giotto belongs, undoubtedly, the honour of reviving this long-dead branch of art, and of bringing it to a state of comparative perfection that was scarcely to be looked for, even in a genius as versatile as his. What he was capable of in this respect, we will have ample occasion to realize in our review of his later works.

If Giotto has given us a fine example of the life-giving qualities of his work in the above composition, he may be said to have excelled it in the enthroned figure of St. Peter on the reverse of the same panel, as well as in the four full-length saints in the two lateral wings. Here his sense of the plastic rises to a height but seldom surpassed, even in his later works, and, in their life-like properties of form and expression, these figures must remain among his finest creations. Nowhere could Mr. Berenson's theory of "tactile values" be more correctly applied than in connection with these realistic masterpieces. In the firmness with which St. Peter sits upon his throne—in the wonderfully natural motion of the uplifted hand—in the concentrated expression of the features —in the keen feeling for form, so perfectly expressed be-

neath the broad and simple drapery—we have a masterly example of Giotto's powers, and one which even Masaccio, at a later period, could not easily have surpassed.

In the two representations of the Martyrdoms of St. Peter and of St. Paul, we have compositions less limited in extent and with subjects more suited to the dramatic tendencies of Giotto's genius. To both, the painter has succeeded in imparting that same passionate life and energy of action so characteristic of his later work in other parts. A glance at the accompanying reproduction of the Crucifixion of St. Peter (Pl. 1) will show the perfection to which Giotto had arrived at this early stage of his activity, in what was destined to be, apart from form and expression, the greatest characteristic of his art—his sense of *composition* and *design*. In the central foreground the figure of the martyred saint hangs head downwards on the cross. In the conformations of the nude body, there is apparent no slight knowledge of anatomical proportion, and the sense of suspended weight in the hanging figure is most skilfully expressed. Below, on either side of the cross, are grouped the other participants in the tragedy, closely resembling, in their general arrangement, the later Giottesque crucifixions of the Saviour. Both in regard to action and expression, each and all of these various figures are worthy of the most careful and attentive examination.[1]

[1] In the composition of this work, Giotto seems undoubtedly to have had in mind the fresco representing the same subject, in the right transept of the upper church of St. Francis at Assisi, with which painting he must have had a previous acquaintance. The background, with its two curious pyramids—one of them undoubtedly inspired by the famous monument of Caius Cestius—is identical in both cases; and what has generally been considered a

*Anderson photo*] [*St. Peter's, Rome*

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. PETER

Plate 1

Less formal in its arrangement, and even more impressive in effect, is the accompanying representation of the martyrdom of St. Paul. To the left, shrouded in a white mantle, lies the headless body of the saint, mourned over by three of his followers in attitudes of the deepest grief. Behind stands a group of armoured foot-soldiers, resting on their spears. In the foreground, the executioner—a somewhat Byzantine figure—sheathes his bloody sword, and to the right a second company of soldiers on horse and foot are grouped, in a masterly manner, around another pyramid. The dipping outline of a hill, set off by a few scattered trees, cuts clear against the golden sky in the background; and on the height to the left, the figure of a woman stands out in strange relief, her arms uplifted to receive a garment which the saint—whose spirit is being carried up by angels in a similar manner to that of St. Peter in the foregoing picture—casts down to her. An octagonal building with a conical roof crowns the summit on the opposite side, setting off the composition most effectively.

Nowhere, in all the art that had gone before, do we come upon paintings such as these, in which we can see the thoughts and feelings of the different actors so clearly mirrored in their movements and expression. In them Giotto has given us a perfect example of that deep psychological insight into human nature which is so remarkable a feature in all his work. What, in the art

reminiscence of Giotto's study of the classical antiquities of the Eternal City, appears almost certainly to have been directly copied from this older work, attributed, with equal lack of critical foundation, to Cimabue and to Giunta Pisano.

of his predecessors, had so often become a mere excess of violent passion and grimace, has here been replaced by a calmer, but a deeper, spirit of individual feeling and expression—none the less passionate, and infinitely more true.

In the Virgin and Christ-Child of the predella (Pl. 2), Giotto was afforded another opportunity for the assertion of his own naturalistic ideas as to the treatment of this most favourite of subjects. Although still preserving, to some degree, the hieratic dignity common to the usual Byzantine representations of the Madonna, Giotto has sought to express in her what was to him an equally sacred quality—the human dignity of motherhood ; and it is upon this more natural side of his conception that he has laid the greater stress. There is a tenderness of feeling and expression in her face and figure that is quite new to the painting of the time. In the little Infant Saviour, the painter has gone still further in his set fidelity to Nature ; his Christ-Child is no longer the supernatural and symbolic creation of earlier mediæval art—a child in form, a mature being in expression—an infantile embodiment of Divine Power and Justice—but a living and human babe, engaged in no further visible outward occupation than that of sucking its thumb. No less natural, in sentiment and feeling, are the two stately angels that guard the throne with their heavenly presence—their eyes bent lovingly upon their infant Master, as they slowly swing their censers from side to side. To right and left, in two long rows, stand the Twelve Apostles, beginning with St. Peter and St. James—tall and earnest figures, finely characterized and felt, each of them stamped with an individuality entirely its own.

*Anderson photo*] [*St. Peter's, Rome*

THE MADONNA AND SAINTS

Plate 2

The beautiful gold border that divides them is most wonderfully figured, with a pattern that suggests the strange and mystic lettering of some long-forgotten language. The same sense of individuality which marks these Apostles, is to be found in the half-length figures in what was evidently the central panel of the predella, on the reverse of the altarpiece.

Great as were the changes here brought about by Giotto in the matter of form, composition, and expression, there remains still another most essential quality in his work in which the revolution he effected was no less startling or complete—the quality of *colour*. In this distinctive element of his art, as well as in those other qualities of form and of design, which we have spoken of above, the Stefaneschi altar-piece must be considered as the earliest of really modern paintings—a model to the centuries that followed, and even foreshadowing the creations of the great colourists of a later age. Only to those well acquainted with the work of the Latin and Byzantine artists before Giotto's day, will it be possible fully to appreciate the real extent of the great and lasting change that Giotto carried out—alone and unassisted—in this direction; and although, in his later works, his absorption in the problems of form and composition often caused him to neglect his early love of colour and of beauty, pure and simple, he never really became unconscious of the charm which these two qualities seem so strongly to have exercised over him during the earlier years of his career. Certainly nowhere in the list of all his works—with the possible exception of the earlier frescoes at Assisi—do we find a deeper love and enjoyment of pure colour, than that which Giotto shows

us here. In the vivacity of tints and gaiety of combinations which illuminate this altar-piece, the painter seems fairly to revel in his new-found secret; and yet, with all this feast of colour, there is combined a sense of temperance and measure characteristic of the artist, and there is naught that is meaningless or inharmonious throughout the whole. Centuries have been unable to dim the brightness of his work, and it remains until to-day an unsurpassed delight among the panel-pictures of the years that followed after.

Still again, in the matter of draughtsmanship and technical execution, the work shows an immense advance over the best Byzantine paintings of the time, and gives us already an idea of that conscientious and painstaking spirit which marks every genuine creation of Giotto's brush. In it we find the exquisite delicacy of the miniaturist coupled with the largeness and strength of one accustomed to work of a broader kind; there is a minuteness of finish to each part that clearly indicates the amount of care and patience lavished upon it by the painter; and in the comparative security and command of line, Giotto shows us that, even at this early period, he was by no means so entirely lacking in his powers as a draughtsman as many modern critics would lead us to believe.

The relative perfection of workmanship evinced by this painting, as well as its dignity of conception, certainly betoken the work of a painter who had already arrived at a comparative maturity of style, and leave no possible doubt that it must have been preceded, either here at Rome or elsewhere, by other independent works of no slight merit or importance. Nevertheless, to the

best of our knowledge, as we have said before, no such works have been spared us to the present day—or if any such do happen to exist, as so many critics and historians believe, we must confess our inability to recognize in them the handiwork of the Giotto whom we know; and we must turn to Assisi—not to the Upper but the Lower Church of San Francesco—for a continuation of that style with which we have already become acquainted in the Stefaneschi altar-piece. Before leaving the scene of Giotto's labours at Rome, however, we may devote our attention to the other of the two commissions which we know him to have received from his patron, Cardinal Stefaneschi; and to a rapid consideration of such other works as he is said to have undertaken during his visits to the capital.

In a very different state of preservation from the altar-piece is the mosaic of the "Navicella." From Giotto's time to the present day, this work, so extolled by writers and historians, has undergone such frequent and repeated restoration as to be reduced to a mere caricature of its former self. Fortunately, we are in the possession of two works from which we may draw a better idea of the original appearance of Giotto's famous mosaic than is possible from a study of the mere wreck that now remains. The first of these is a cartoon preserved in the church of Sta. Maria dei Cappuccini—said to have been made from the mosaic itself some twenty years after its first recorded restoration in 1617; the second, a fresco on the ceiling of the Spanish chapel in Sta. Maria Novella at Florence, is evidently a free but close copy of Giotto's original, painted either during the master's lifetime, or soon after his death, by some one or other of his pupils.

In both cases the composition is—allowing for differences of space—almost identical in its main features.

Giotto has had before his mind, in the representation of his subject, the words of the fourteenth chapter of St. Matthew, and has seized upon the most dramatic moment in the miraculous episode on the Sea of Galilee. In the central background the ship of the Apostles tosses unevenly upon the storm-driven sea, its sails swollen before the wind and thrown out against the lowering sky, the rigging stretched to its utmost tautness. The Apostles themselves crowd the boat in various attitudes of fear and in wonder at the apparition of their Lord, Who stands before us, to the right, a grandly impressive figure, calm and majestic, His right hand held out to the sinking Peter, who struggles in the waves near by. On a rock in the foreground opposite kneels the figure of a man, engaged in the peaceful occupation of fishing with a rod and line, apparently unconscious of the scene that is being enacted about him. In the clouds above, two weird beings, evidently representing the genii of the winds—strangely reminiscent of the classic and early Christian art of a period long past—add to the fury of the elements. In the mosaic itself, a diminutive half-length figure of a worshipping cardinal—to all appearance a portrait of the donor—fills the lower corner to the extreme right.

Although it is impossible to judge of the exact extent of the changes and alterations undergone by the mosaic previous to the time in which the cartoon was executed, we may nevertheless arrive, through a careful study of this drawing and of the fresco at Florence, at an approximate idea of the original appearance of what once must

have been a masterpiece that claimed the attention of every artistic visitor to Rome; and it is easy to imagine the effect which such a work must certainly have produced upon the artists of the time.[1] Unfortunately, we can go no further in our appreciation of the merits of the original work, or in the formation of any definite idea as to the exact development of Giotto's style at this period of his career.

If we may accept the authority of the "Martirologio" in placing the date of the mosaic at 1298, certain reasons appear to us sufficiently weighty in themselves to confirm our opinion that the Stefaneschi altar-piece was painted considerably before that time. The oft-repeated statement of critics and historians alike, that the latter work was commissioned and executed in the same year as was the "Navicella," is due purely to a careless reading of the notices already mentioned; and it is hardly to be believed that the master could have carried out all the vast quantity of work which we know to be his in San Francesco at Assisi—together with the other commissions which he undoubtedly received in Rome, Florence, and elsewhere—within the comparatively short period of time between 1298 and the probable date of his journey to Padua, in or about 1306. We know that Stefaneschi was created Cardinal and Canon of St. Peter's, as early as 1295, and there is no reason against our own sup-

[1] Since the above was written, Mr. Berenson has drawn our attention to an old drawing, evidently by an early Sienese master, now in the possession of Lord Pembroke, which may perhaps be considered as giving an even more faithful idea of Giotto's original design than is the case with either of the above-mentioned reproductions,

position that the commission for the altarpiece may have dated from that time, or from the year following; certainly such a supposition is far more in accordance with a purely critical chronological arrangement of Giotto's works, than is the acceptance of the traditional date of 1298.

It is impossible to ascertain the real extent of Giotto's artistic activity in Rome during the closing years of the thirteenth century, or the precise number and duration of his visits to that city. Probabilities are certainly in favour of his having undertaken other commissions than those which we have already spoken of as having been given him by Cardinal Stefaneschi, and it is hardly likely that Pope Boniface and his court would have allowed a man of his exceptional gifts to depart without exacting from him a promise to return. Certain it is that internal evidence points to more than one visit paid by the painter to the Eternal City at this period.

Vasari, partly on the earlier authority of Ghiberti, gives us to understand that, in addition to the two works already mentioned, Giotto painted five scenes from the life of Christ, in the tribune of St. Peter's, and various other works in different parts of the same church, among them being an angel seven *braccia* high, which evidently stood over the organ of the later church in Vasari's own day. Again, the same writer specially mentions a Crucifix painted for the church of Sta. Maria sopra Minerva. Whether Giotto in reality executed these works, we cannot say, as not a trace of them remains. Tradition further has it that he painted for his patron Stefaneschi, in San Giorgio in Velabro, of which church that prelate was titular cardinal and deacon; but

the ruined frescoes in the apse of that building, although defying criticism in their present state, can hardly be said to have been conceived in the spirit of Giotto's known manner.

Strange to say, neither Ghiberti nor Vasari makes any mention of a work which, if we may judge by the one repainted fragment that has been spared to us of the original, was undoubtedly an important creation of the master's hand—the only one of his Roman works, beside the "Navicella" and the altarpiece of St. Peter's, a trace of which has been handed down to us. We allude to the much damaged fresco representing the Proclamation of the Jubilee by Boniface VIII., now immured in one of the pilasters in the nave of the Lateran Basilica. This fragment was once part of a far more extensive work which stood in the *loggia* of the old basilica of the Lateran, one of three paintings—all probably by Giotto—ordered by the Pope in commemoration of the Jubilee instituted by him in the year 1300. Writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tell us that the two lateral frescoes had for their subjects, the Baptism of Constantine, and the Building of the Lateran Church. Of these two works, no further descriptions have come down to us in any form, but of the subject and composition of the principal fresco we may derive a fairly correct idea from an ancient drawing in the Ambrosian Library at Milan.[1] This drawing, which seems undoubtedly authentic, appears to have been copied from the original fresco; and, although we cannot look for any resemblance in the matter of technical detail and qualities of style, the copyist seems to have

[1] Discovered some years back by M. Eugène Müntz.

faithfully represented the general arrangement of Giotto's work. In the drawing we see Pope Boniface standing in the balcony of the *loggia*, accompanied by two attendants in precisely the same attitudes as depicted in the remnant of fresco still preserved to us. The figure to the Pope's left reads from a scroll, upon which are to be seen the words: "*Bonifacius ep. servus servorum Dei ad perpetuam rei memoriam.*" To right and left of the balcony are ranged the cardinals and other members of the papal court. Below, a group of citizens on horse and foot are gathered about the three tall columns which support the *loggia* and its balcony. All in all, the composition is well and symmetrically arranged; and Giotto seems to have succeeded, as usual, in endowing a subject that was in itself of no particular dramatic interest, with that variety and life imparted by him to all his works.

Covered, as it is, by successive coats or repaint, and altered almost beyond all recognition, the damage it has received has not been sufficient to deprive the fresco in the Lateran of its original qualities of form and expression; and it still bears unmistakable signs of Giotto's style. Through this ruined fragment we can yet form some idea of what was probably the last work painted by Giotto in the Eternal City; for, although we know him to have passed through Rome on more than one occasion during a later period of his life, no further records exist of his activity in that capital. The Rome to which he returned was no longer the great city of his youth—no longer the seat of the Papacy nor the proud centre of Italian art; Avignon had replaced her in the first of these positions—Florence in the second.

If we may trust the sources of information alluded to

above, the frescoes in the Lateran *loggia* originally bore the inscription: "*Dominus Bonifacius Papa VIII. fecit totum opus præsentis thalami. Anno Domini MCCC.*" This would lead us to suspect the presence of Giotto in Rome during at least a part of that most memorable year. Vasari tells us that during his stay in the Eternal City, he made the acquaintance of the celebrated miniaturist, Oderigi da Gubbio, and his no less celebrated rival, Franco Bolognese, as well as of Pietro Cavallini, one of the most famous Roman painters of the day, who is said to have assisted Giotto in the execution of the "Navicella" and of other of his works, and to have been among the first to adopt the master's manner as his own. No doubt, in this respect, Cavallini was not alone; and we can easily imagine that Giotto's circle of acquaintances, at this stage of his career, was a far wider one than that spoken of by Vasari, and that there were few celebrities in the art world of the day with whom he did not come more or less closely into personal contact. Among the deeper and more lasting friendships, however, which he may possibly have contracted or cemented in the papal city, during this year of Jubilee, was that lifelong one with Dante Alighieri, whom we know to have been there present on an embassy from Florence. Whether Giotto had made the acquaintance of the famous poet during earlier years, we do not know, but certainly here at Rome, ties of country and of taste, and the sympathy of two great minds, would have brought them into a closer intimacy than before.

Numerous must have been the commissions poured in upon Giotto as his fame increased and spread—for that such fame was his, the very importance of the works

undertaken by him at Rome is in itself sufficient proof; and it was but in the course of natural events that the young artist should have been early called upon to measure his powers against the older painters of his day, in that great arena of mediæval art, the church of San Francesco at Assisi. And it is here, rather than at Rome, that we shall find unfolded before our eyes the history of the real development of his style.

## CHAPTER V

### ASSISI—THE LOWER CHURCH

THE limits of this little work render it impossible for us to enter into any historical description, however interesting, of the great church of San Francesco at Assisi—far less into a critical examination of the earlier paintings with which it is adorned—and the reader must rest satisfied with the few words of mention already accorded these works in a previous portion of this volume. Pages upon pages have been written concerning the traditional share of Giotto in these same early frescoes, but the futility of the discussion is so apparent, that we may pass at once to an examination of such of the paintings in this vast edifice as leave no doubts within our mind as to their correct attribution to the master forming the present subject of our studies. And, although our chronological arrangement of these works may differ absolutely from that generally held to be correct by the majority of writers and of students, we may state that any such arrangement on our part has been founded—as is the case with our consideration of all of Giotto's work—upon a purely critical basis, in absolute independence of all traditional opinion; and we shall attempt to give our reasons for such a disposition in our review of the works themselves.

Without further preliminary remarks, therefore, we

may commence at once with the frescoes which cover the walls of the right transept in the Lower Church, as being without doubt the earliest independent works of Giotto's brush of which the building can at present boast. Here, on the ceilings and the lateral walls, the master painted a series of ten scenes from the life of Christ, and of the Virgin Mary, which, if not the most perfect, are certainly to be classed among the most poetic and charming of all his creations.

Giotto begins the series with the *The Annunciation of the Virgin*, on the wall space above the arched entrance to the Cappella del Sacramento. Incredible as it may seem, this truly beautiful work has, by some unaccountable chance, up to the present day escaped the notice of the majority of writers, and we have searched in vain for even a passing mention of it on the part of any one of the many critics who have occupied themselves with descriptions of Giotto's paintings. Such silence, however, can only be attributed to careless oversight, as it is difficult to believe that any serious student of Giotto's work could possibly have failed to appreciate the beauty and importance of this great fresco, artistically one of the most lovely of his earlier creations. In force of movement, as in beauty of expression, it stands proclaimed a masterpiece of the first rank, and it would be hard to decide as to which of the two figures in the composition is deserving of the greater meed of praise.

Next in order to *The Annunciation* comes the fresco of *The Visitation* (Pl. 3), high up on the vaulted ceiling to the right. Here we enter at once into that simplicity and conciseness of composition which later becomes so salient a feature of the master's peculiar genius, and which we

*Alinari photo*]

THE VISITATION

[*Assisi, Lower Church*

Plate 3

find at the highest stage of its development in the Arena Chapel at Padua. Giotto has told the story of the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth with a truth and depth of sentiment that could with difficulty be surpassed. Nothing could be more natural, or more deeply felt, than the action of the elder of the two women, as she reverently bends forward to gaze into the face of Mary, who so quietly returns the look and the embrace. There is an infinity of love and tenderness in the expression of Elizabeth's face and figure—in the bend of her head and in the movement of her body. Here we touch again upon another most noticeable characteristic of Giotto's art, and one which leads us in a way to compare it with that of classic times—the significance of the body and its movements as a means of expression. We shall find, as we progress in our review of Giotto's works, that all of his creations are stamped with this same sense of the significance of movement, and that often, by the merest motion of a hand or attitude of the body, he succeeds in realizing far more than he could possibly have done by relying merely upon facial expression—indeed we find him at times neglecting this latter quality almost entirely. Behind the Virgin come two matronly figures, impressively statuesque in form and in the splendid sweep of their drapery, followed by two maid-servants bearing bundles and a basket. To the right stands Elizabeth's house, a charmingly fanciful structure of semi-Gothic style; a vase of flowers adorns the terrace, and a grape-vine spreads its leaves above the courtyard wall. In the portico beneath, a maid awaits the coming of the guest. Already, in this one fresco, we have gained a true idea of Giotto's style and manner at this period of

his career, and the paintings that follow are different but in subjects and degree of attainment.

In the composition of *The Nativity*, Giotto has followed, more closely than in any other fresco of the series, the traditional Byzantine treatment of the subject, but, despite the formality and almost too evident symmetry of arrangement, he has contrived to endow it with a charm entirely his own. In the centre of the fresco the Virgin sits upright on a mattress, gazing upon the swathed figure of her newborn Son. Beyond is the manger, and above, four choirs of adoring angels sweep through the air, their garments fading into mist—already those bird-like beings which we learn so to love in Giotto's later works. Below the shelf of rock on which the Virgin's bed is laid, Giotto has, according to the custom of the time, represented another episode of the scene; two women, very lifelike in action and expression, are engaged in washing and swaddling the Divine Infant. St. Joseph sits in deep thought close by, and to the right, a flying angel appears to the two shepherds, who receive the heavenly messenger with well depicted surprise. In the background, a conical hill sweeps upward into the night, flanked by a flowing stream shining in the starlight, and crowned by the Star of Bethlehem.

*The Adoration of the Kings* is remarkable for the harmony of arrangement between the figures themselves, and the background of buildings and nobly formed mountain. St. Joseph is, strange to say, conspicuous by his absence—an unusual circumstance. Very realistic and finely carried out, and showing to the full Giotto's deep study of natural movement, is the figure of the furthermost of the two grooms,

The next fresco has for its subject *The Presentation in the Temple.* Some of the heads of the bystanders are here of unusual beauty, especially the striking profile of the woman in the group to the left. By no means the least important feature of this work is the beautiful Gothic interior in which the ceremony is taking place—one of the finest architectural settings which we possess from Giotto's hand, and one in which the master not only shows himself as a careful student of architecture, but as one possessed of no slight knowledge of perspective as well.

In *The Flight into Egypt*, Giotto has attempted, by means of the hilly background, the, for him, unusual number of trees, and the two distant fortified castles eyeing each other from their respective heights, to give an idea of the wildness of the country through which the travellers are passing. St. Joseph heads the procession, holding the bridle of the ass, which bears lightly its precious burden. Two servants bring up the rear; one of them encourages the animal, and the other, an impressive figure of a woman, bears a bundle upon her head. In the air above, two angels, the easy motion of whose flight is most beautifully rendered, point out the way. Most characteristic of Giotto is the drawing of the trees, so typically and distinctly represented by a few bold strokes and touches.

Although violence of action was never a condition under which Giotto was entirely at home—despite his deeply dramatic tendencies—and although he seems to have avoided, on every possible occasion, any subject calling for exaggerated movement, he has been surprisingly successful in his representation of the next scene,

*The Massacre of the Innocents.* Excellent as a composition, this fresco exhibits a sense of form by no means slight, especially in the carefully modelled bodies of the dead infants. Again, in the matter of action, it ranks higher than Giotto's later representation of the same subject at Padua. Calling for particular attention is the finely expressive little group of horsemen to the right.

The next subject, that of *Christ Disputing with the Doctors*, hardly holds its own with the others in interest, although some of the figures are most expressive in form and action. Noteworthy again is the perspective of the Gothic interior.

In the following fresco, lower down on the left wall, Giotto has evidently intended to depict the *Return of Christ with His parents from the Temple*, and not the *Return from Egypt*, as some writers appear to believe. There is something almost classic in the splendid figure of the Virgin, so majestic and graceful in pose and drapery; and the artist has here fully realized his ideas of plasticity and form. Of the greatest interest, also, are the varied buildings within the city wall, and the quaint Gothic palace to the right.

We now come to the last scene of all—*The Crucifixion* (Pl. 4)—one of the most perfect of Giotto's works. In this representation of the culminating scene of the Divine Tragedy, the painter arrives at a depth of power and feeling, added to a nobility of expression and perfection of composition, which raise it at once to a foremost place in the list of his greatest masterpieces. Not only is it one of the most perfect representations of the Crucifixion that Christian art had known up to the time, but it can safely be added without fear of exaggeration, that no

*Alinari photo*] THE CRUCIFIXION [*Assisi, Lower Church*

Plate 4

subsequent attempt on the part of any artist has ever succeeded in surpassing it in dignity and expressiveness. Even Giotto himself, when he painted another version of the tragic episode years later, and at the height of his powers, in the Arena Chapel at Padua, failed to equal this previous effort, either in force or effect, and certainly not in the matter of design. Judged as a composition, this flawless work is worthy of ranking with such artistic triumphs as *The Funeral of St. Francis*, in the Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce, and other like works of the master's ripest years. In the painting of this Crucifixion, Giotto undoubtedly had before his mind the—for its period—equally wonderful representation of the same subject in the transept of the Upper Church, attributed by tradition to Cimabue. But, while the main effect of that work is due to the delineation of the passionate frenzy to which the majority of the participants are given over, Giotto has raised his conception of the scene to a higher spiritual plane, tempering the outward expressions of grief and emotion on the part of the followers of Christ with a certain nobility and calm restraint which serves but to accentuate the depths of feeling to which the different actors in the tragedy are evidently moved. The strange sense of quietness and suppressed passion which pervades almost the entire work, is broken only by the violent grief of the fluttering angels. Giotto has introduced the figures of St. Francis and four other brethren[1] of his order as contemplative participants in the scene, but in so perfect a manner as

[1] One of these is crowned with a halo similar to that borne by St. Francis, and, together with the figure in front, appears to be a contemporary portrait.

in no way to detract from the dramatic representation of the subject. The figure of the Lord Himself hangs quietly upon the Cross, unmoved by the painful physical contortions common to the majority of the crucifixions of the time; the proportions are at once just and pleasing—the expression of the head and the entire body denoting a peaceful calm. The standing figures of St. John and the two women behind him, as well as that of the Magdalen, express most strongly the grief and pain by which they are shaken. The look of wonder and reverence on the face of the officer in profile is no less strongly depicted, while the kneeling figure of St. Francis is most beautiful in its expression of ecstatic adoration. The group with the fainting Virgin is very natural in action; and the contending passions of the priests, to the extreme right, are clearly expressed in their faces and movements. In draughtsmanship, in the sense of plastic form, and in the beautiful arrangement of the drapery, Giotto has here surpassed all his previous works, and the entire fresco shows clearly the care and attention lavished upon it by the master.

To all who are in the least acquainted with Giotto's style, or in any measure gifted with critical sense, it must remain a matter of no small surprise that the authenticity of these works, deeply stamped as they are with the most characteristic qualities of the master's manner, should ever have been questioned. Nevertheless, such is the case, and even at the present day we meet with certain writers who would lead us to believe that these truly beautiful paintings are but creations of Giotto's *school.* We may pass over all such unaccountable criticism, however, with the silence which it deserves,

and turn our attention for a moment to a comparison of these frescoes with the Stefaneschi altar-piece. Although possessing much in common, it will require no very great insight on the part of the observer to recognize the superiority, both technical and otherwise, of these paintings at Assisi. In addition to a greater freedom and precision of design, we find here a far higher development of that most characteristic of Giotto's qualities—form. Upon the importance of this feeling for the plastic in Giotto's art we have already touched at length, and we shall become more and more convinced, as we proceed in our review of Giotto's works, that it is to this predominant idea of *form* that we must look for a correct critical classification of the master's paintings. In the matter of movement and expression also, there is a noticeable advance upon the Roman work ; and, allowing for the difference of medium, the colouring has here gained both in softness and in harmony. In regard to composition, enough has already been said. Summarily, the marked improvement of technique and style which we meet within these frescoes, leaves no possible doubt in our mind as to their being subsequent in execution to the altar-piece at Rome, despite the prevalent opinion to the contrary.

Before ending our examination of these frescoes, we must call attention to the architectural features which they contain. Nowhere in the list of works that Giotto has left us, do we find the master more charming in the detail of his architectural backgrounds than is here the case, and nowhere do we find his evident love for that art more pronouncedly asserted. Here we already find him giving pictorial form to those architectural dreams—often

fantastic though they be—to which he was destined to give a permanent and lasting expression, years later on, in that fairy-like Tower which still bears his name.

Leaving, for the present, the remaining three frescoes in the transept, illustrative of certain miracles of St. Francis, we may pass to a consideration of the great paintings on the ceiling above the high-altar—the next in order of succession to those which we have already examined, and perhaps the most famous of all Giotto's works. Of the four frescoes which cover the arched compartments of the vaulting, three are allegorically representative of the vows of the Franciscan Order—Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience—the fourth depicts the Glory of St. Francis. Much has been said and written regarding the original conception of these works, and many writers are of the opinion that Giotto was especially indebted to Dante Alighieri for the arrangement of his subjects. Such an opinion, however, is devoid of any reasonable grounds for support; and in all probability, in the general representation of his subject matter, Giotto followed the suggestions of his employers, who had in turn enlarged upon the writings of the earlier Franciscans. However this may have been, the master has succeeded in handing down to posterity three of the most perfect allegorical pictures that the Christian world has ever known—works which, in their clear conciseness of conception and of thought, are broadly characteristic of the painter's spirit.

Taking the frescoes in their usual order, we may begin with that in which Giotto has represented the allegorical marriage of St. Francis with his "Lady Poverty" (Pl. 5). The master has, principally as an aid to the symmetry

*Alinari photo*] POVERTY [*Assisi, Lower Church*

Plate 5

of the composition, represented the mystic ceremony as taking place upon the summit of a bare and shelving hill. Upon the highest and central ledge of rock, Christ Himself blesses the union of the Saint with his chosen Bride. Dignified and noble is the figure of the Redeemer, and full of calm expression. That of Poverty is tall and emaciated, clad in a patched and ragged gown supported about her waist by the Franciscan girdle; over her head she wears a tattered scarf held by a hempen fillet. She stands amid briars and thorns, but roses and tall lilies flower behind her and about her head. Faith, Charity, and Hope stand in attendance at her left; the last-named seems to answer for the bride, and with her bears the hexagonal nimbus distinctive of the Virtues. Charity holds in her hand a heart, and from her head, garlanded with roses, spring flames of living fire. St. Francis stands in profile to the left, beardless and comparatively young, clad in the habit of his order, and about to place the ring upon the finger of his Lady. Below, a boy casts stones at the ragged bride; another smites her with a rod, and a dog, following their example, barks savagely at the gaunt apparition on the rock above, so unconscious of them all in the absorbing solemnity of the moment. On each side of the principal group stands a glorious choir of angels, tall and splendid beings, rapt witnesses of the mysterious celebration. Lower down, to the extreme left, a youth is in the act of divesting himself of his outer garment, and about to give it to an aged beggar; an angel holds him by the arm and points upward to the central figures in the scene. In the opposite foreground, three men, symbolic of earthly greed and pleasure, turn from the gentle admonishments of another angel, who

seeks to draw their attention to the main event that is taking place above. One of them, grasping a bag of gold, appears not to disregard the angel's words, but the spirit of avarice seems to gain a painful victory over his heart; a second, cloaked and covered in his hood, appears to be less moved; and the third, with a falcon on his wrist, openly spurns, with a scoffing gesture, the advice of his angelic counsellor. In the space above, two angels float upwards, one of them bearing a garment and a bag of gold, the other a miniature palace with an inclosed garden, both of which gifts, representative of the worldly goods given up in charity, are received with outstretched arms by the figure of the Almighty, leaning from the clouds of Heaven.

No less concise and clearly rendered is the allegory of Chastity (Pl. 6), which fills the following fresco. On the summit, again, of a bare and fissured hill, rises a tall and stately tower, protected by a battlemented fortress from all outward danger of attack. The white banner of Purity flies above the building, and below it hangs the bell of constant Vigilance. Through the open window of the tower can be seen the veiled figure of Chastity herself, engaged in prayer. Toward her two angels fly, bearing in their hands a book and vase of palm-leaves. In the foreground before the fortress, two others are baptizing a youth in a quadrangular marble font; two more stand in attendance, bearing the convert's garments; Purity and Fortitude lean from the walls and present him with a banner and a shield. Stately bearded warriors, winged and armoured, carrying bucklers and the symbol of Penitence, the scourge, guard the precincts of the castle. To the right, three beautiful angelic figures, clad in

*Alinari photo*] [*Assisi, Lower Church*

CHASTITY

Plate 6

monk-like garments, and armed with the symbols of the Passion, beat back a hoard of evil spirits into the depths below. Near them, hooded Penitence drives off, with his scourge, the monstrous figure of Earthly Love—a creature with the body of a youth and the talons of a harpy, blindfolded and crowned with roses, with a string of human hearts hanging from the belt which holds his quiver. To the left, a more peaceful scene is taking place, where St. Francis, accompanied by two angels, is welcoming a monk, a nun, and a lay-brother—evidently representative of the three divisions of his order.

Next comes the allegory of Obedience (Pl. 7). Seated in an open Romanesque loggia, Giotto has represented the winged figure of Obedience, dressed in the Franciscan garb, a yoke about his neck, about to place a second upon the shoulders of a kneeling friar, who bends his head devoutly to receive it. To the right sits the double-headed figure of Prudence, crowned, and holding in her hands a compass and a small round mirror. Under the corresponding arch to the right is the charming figure of Humility, bareheaded, with flowing hair, clad in a simple gown, and holding in her outstretched hand a lighted taper. In the foreground before her, a centaur-like monstrosity, with the body of a man, the fore-legs of a horse, the hind-quarters of a dog, and a serpent-like tail, starts back upon its haunches as it struck by a ray of light from the mirror held by Prudence, towards whom the angel near by points. This weird being is probably symbolic of the vices contrary to the virtues here represented. Opposite, a second angel draws the attention of two kneeling youths to the figure of Humility. To either side is a group of kneeling

angels, vying in loveliness with those in the preceding fresco. In the upper part of the painting, St. Francis stands upon the roof of the loggia, a cross in his left hand, a yoke upon his shoulders. The hands of the Almighty appear from out of the clouds, grasping the end of the saint's girdle, as if to draw him by it up to Heaven. Two angels kneel beside him, bearing open scrolls symbolic of the rules of the Franciscan Order.

Of a less allegorical nature is the fresco in the fourth division of the ceiling, representing as it does the Glory of St. Francis (Pl. 8). The Saint—a strangely impressive figure in his gown of black and gold—sits in majestic dignity upon a marble throne, covered by a *baldacchino* and surmounted by a banner bearing a cross and seven stars. All about, the scene is one of joy and jubilation. A swaying multitude of angels surrounds the throne on every side, some dancing, some playing, others bearing lilies—all joining in the loud hymn of joyful praise.

In the ornamental borders which divide the frescoes, are medallions containing busts and figures of angels, the symbols of the Evangelists, and various other allegorical subjects, executed with an exceptional delicacy and care—some of them of unusual beauty.

Although we recognize in these great frescoes a direct continuation of the manner with which we have already become acquainted in the adjoining transept, in technical execution and in general development of form they mark a decided and unmistakable advance over the majority of these earlier works. The occasional unevenness, noticeable in the preceding frescoes, has here entirely

*Alinari photo*] THE GLORIFICATION OF ST. FRANCIS [*Assisi, Lower Church*

Plate 8

disappeared, and in its stead we find a uniformity of style which hitherto we have not met with to any like extent; there is no longer the least sense of hesitation or of weakness, but all is carried out with a decision and security, and a sure control of means, that clearly show Giotto in the full command of all his powers. In composition and in form, in movement and expression, his later works are but superior in degree to these deservedly famous master-pieces.

In lightness and beauty of colour, these allegories show no falling off from the frescoes in the transept, and Giotto undoubtedly took well into consideration, in painting all these works, the dark interior of the building which they were to adorn. Never during the remaining years of his career did he equal the bright loveliness of colour in these two series of frescoes—or, if he may have done so, the restorer's brush has long since destroyed its former beauty. Here, however, we may gaze upon the master's handiwork in all its virgin purity, for no later brush has to any visible extent left its mark upon the original surface. Look well—for once outside this Lower Church, we shall search in vain for any unspoiled fresco of Giotto's hand—not even in the treasure-house at Padua have his creations escaped the doom of "restoration."

Giotto appears to have continued and completed the decoration of the north transept soon after the execution of the allegories, and the three frescoes which cover the lower courses of the northern and western walls certainly date from this period of his activity. Opinion is divided regarding the exact subjects which these paintings are intended to represent. According to some writers, the first of them (Pl. 9) depicts the resuscitation of a child by a

Franciscan friar—a certain Raho—at Rome; according to others, it represents the resurrection of a child of the Spini family, killed by a fall from a window in Florence. In answer to the prayers of his family, St. Francis himself is said to have appeared upon the scene and restored the boy to life. The second and third frescoes (Pls. 10, 11) probably refer to another somewhat similar miracle performed by St. Francis in the town of Suessa, where a young man, killed by the falling of a house, was once more brought to life through the intercession of the Saint.

In these three frescoes Giotto has transported us, at a single step, from the world of allegory and of Biblical History, to the contemporary life of his own day; and has given us a set of pictures in which the realistic tendencies of his genius have had full play. A comparison of these works with those near by will show the difference of spirit in which they were conceived and carried out, and, although the word *naturalistic* may be truly and rightly applied to all Giotto ever did, the distinctions between them are not slight. Few faces or figures here exist that are not, to all appearances, contemporary portraits or studies taken more or less directly from life, strongly drawn and individualized; whereas, in the preceding frescoes, the heads are, almost without exception, purely ideal types. The same difference holds good in regard to costume, and in both cases we have an admirable example of Giotto's keen sense of fitness and propriety.

We have already noticed these same realistic tendencies toward contemporary representation and portraiture in the fragmentary fresco of Pope Boniface, in the Lateran

*Alinari photo*] [*Assisi, Lower Church*

A MIRACLE OF ST. FRANCIS

Plate 9

*Alinari photo*] [*Assisi, Lower Church*

A MIRACLE OF ST. FRANCIS

Plate 10

at Rome,[1] and it may well be said together with these present works from which it cannot be far removed in date, to form the beginning of what we may term Giotto's more distinctly realistic manner—the beginning of a style which must have arrived at the height of its expression in the frescoes illustrating the life of St. Francis in the Upper Church here at Assisi, and in the Bardi Chapel at Florence ; and it is to the consideration of the first-named of these works that we must shortly turn.

In their comparative sobriety of colour, these paintings in the transept show a perceptible change from the gaiety and brightness of the Allegories and the earlier frescoes, although they have not lost in harmony and shading, or in the clearness of their tone. In outline they show an advance both in decision and security of touch, and in drapery and the rendering of form there is a noticeable progress towards simplicity of effect and increased economy of means. With these fine works Giotto may be said to have closed a lengthy period of activity in the Lower Church, and they may well be considered the connecting link between what may aptly be termed—speak-

[1] Whether the three frescoes spoken of above were executed before or after those in the Lateran, we have no means of ascertaining, and, in the absence of all certain information regarding Giotto's movements during this or any other period of his life, we shall not attempt to label his works either here or elsewhere with any fixed or decisive dates. Enough has already been said concerning our ignorance as to the real number of his visits to Rome, and the same may hold good in regard to the exact duration of his labours at Assisi. We have depended throughout this little work merely on critical evidence for a general classification of Giotto's paintings, and where any dates are given they must be accepted by the reader as merely approximate indications, unless special reasons be given for their maintenance.

ing independently of the minor differences of realistic treatment already dwelt upon above—his *first* and *second* manner. What this second manner was we will attempt to show in the following pages.

Before passing to an examination of the frescoes in the Upper Church, we must pause to mention two smaller works painted by Giotto in this same transept—the medallion of Christ, in the vaulting of the window opening out upon the cloisters; and the fresco of St. Francis standing with his hand upon the shoulder of a crowned skeleton, on the same wall above the staircase, symbolic of the passing glory of this world—both of which works appear to date from the same period as the Allegories.

*Alinari photo*] A MIRACLE OF ST. FRANCIS [*Assisi, Lower Church*

Plate 11

## CHAPTER VI

### ASSISI—THE UPPER CHURCH

NOT only has it been the general opinion of writers and of critics since Vasari's day that Giotto worked as an assistant of Cimabue in the Upper Church at Assisi, but all have unanimously agreed in considering the long series of paintings representing the Life and Miracles of the great Saint from whom the building takes its name, as being, either entirely or in part, the earliest independent creations of the master's brush. Where, and at what exact period, this opinion first had its rise, it is difficult to discover; but it has certainly grown to be regarded by modern students in the fixed light of an ancient and long-accepted tradition, and it is only during very recent years that a single critic has dared to question the correctness of what is still considered a proven and unquestionable theory.[1]

Those few writers who have attempted to put forward any reasons of a critical nature in support of their views regarding the supposed early date of these paintings, have invariably sought to base their assertions upon certain resemblances between these works, as they now stand,

[1] We refer to Mr. Berenson, who, to the extent of our knowledge, is the first and only writer to have cast doubts on the chronological position assigned to these frescoes in the usual lists of Giotto's works.

and the older frescoes on the ceilings and the upper walls of the same church. As far as these comparisons appear to have extended, the conclusions arrived at by these writers have been to some degree both rational and excusable. Some such points of resemblance as they have happened to remark, do, to a certain limited extent, undoubtedly appear to exist—but it is in the comparative superficiality of their examination of the works in question that they have been at fault. In limiting themselves to a comparison of certain details, such as an occasional peculiar similarity of facial types and expression, a like hardness of colour and of outline, and a certain vague but noticeable outward affinity of technical execution, they have almost entirely overlooked or under-estimated the importance of such infinitely weightier criteria, necessary to a truly critical comparison of style, as form, composition and inner contents. Had they been less hastily content with the conclusions arrived at through a comparison of such purely outward technical analogies as they imagined themselves to see, these writers might possibly have been led to a deeper consideration of the more essentially characteristic features of the different paintings. Such a consideration would probably have led in turn to a closer examination of the possible causes of certain apparent similarities which, in the light of calm and reflective criticism, could not fail to appear as other than suspicious at the least. No one of these otherwise painstaking and conscientious critics, however, appears ever for a single moment to have entertained the slightest doubts as to the genuineness of these paintings in their present state. To be sure, certain only too conspicuous blotches of quite recent repaint—far too evident to deceive

the most casual observers—did not escape the notice of some of these, but the possibility of an older and more general restoration seems never to have occurred to them —or if so, to have been immediately dismissed.

It is not our intention here to enter into anything resembling a dissertation on Repaint; nor is this in any way a subject fitted for verbal discussion, all knowledge in this technical branch of connoisseurship being of necessity acquired only by patient observation and practical experience; and it would be little short of ludicrous for us to attempt to prove, in the pages of this book, what is only too often a matter of mere personal conviction, even on the part of the most practised of experts. When, therefore, we take it upon ourselves to state that we coincide throughout with the one critic whom we have already mentioned as being at variance with all others in his views regarding the frescoes at present under consideration, and give it as our personal conviction that the greater number of these paintings have not only been restored, but *made entirely over*, we do not look for the support of the majority of those who have taken the usual stand in regard to the question, and who deny the existence of anything beyond a slight retouching of certain parts.

To us it appears a matter of certainty that these works were entirely repainted at a comparatively early period, and that since that time they have suffered frequent lesser restorations—so that hardly an inch of the original surface now remains exposed.[1] As is usually the case, the figures

[1] To all appearances, the restorer who undertook the principal repainting of these frescoes must have had constantly in mind the older works above, with which he undoubtedly had a previous close

themselves have suffered most, the original features and expression of the heads having been entirely lost in the caricatures by which they have been replaced. The hands and feet also, have, in almost every case, been either changed or renewed. In the general conformation and movement of the bodies, however, and to a certain extent in the drapery as well, the restorer has by some strange chance, either purposely or unconsciously, retained no small amount of the original spirit of the work, enough in fact—as we shall find in the somewhat similar case of the master's later works at Florence—to leave no possible doubt in the mind of any one really acquainted with Giotto's style, as to the question of their authorship. Aside from their excellence as compositions, and their similarity in this respect to the later frescoes in the Bardi Chapel, none but Giotto could have been responsible for the powerful sense of form, the passionate energy of movement, and the simple directness of expression which these works still display, even under their present disguise of restoration and repaint.

acquaintance—so much so that he seems to have attempted to imitate as closely as possible their colour and their style in his restoration of these later paintings. In doing so he appears early to have discovered the impossibility of successfully combining the greatly differing manners of Giotto and his predecessors in a partial restoration, and to have decided upon entirely repainting the greater part of the series. This, to us, is the most probable and credible solution of the question, and may very possibly account for the visible differences between the *first* fresco and those immediately following. The former, though heavily repainted, still preserves to a certain extent Giotto's outward style and his manner of colouring, while the second is quite different both in colour and expression, and has every appearance of having been entirely re-done, at least as far as the figures are concerned.

Of the twenty-eight frescoes which occupy, continuously, the entire lower course of the walls inclosing the nave, the first nineteen, together with the medallion of the Madonna and Child above the entrance door, are—or rather were—without doubt works of Giotto's hand; the remaining scenes no longer show the characteristics of the master, and point to the work of one of his many pupils, of whom we shall have more to say in another place.

The commission to paint the principal events in the history of the great Saint of Assisi, the memory of whose life and deeds was still fresh throughout the greater part of Italy, and especially so in Umbria, was undoubtedly an honour appreciated to the utmost by Giotto, and one calculated to stimulate him to the exercise of his greatest powers. In taking up the subject of St. Francis he was enabled to treat a series of episodes closely connected with the life of his own day, and eminently adapted to the employment of that realistic simplicity of treatment so markedly characteristic of his genius. Here, too, he was called upon to create his own compositions as well as his own types. The story of St. Francis had not been sufficiently long the property of painters to have acquired the same conventional and set formulæ of representation as was the case with the older Biblical subjects, and in this respect no small demand was made upon his inventive genius. How he fulfilled the task which was set before him is made evident in the frescoes themselves, and the compositions here for the first time designed by him were handed down through succeeding centuries and schools, as models incapable of improvement.

In the treatment of his various subjects, Giotto un-

doubtedly followed, more or less faithfully, the descriptions given us by St. Bonaventura in his "Life of St. Francis," written some thirty years after the Saint's death, and based upon the earlier writings of the "Three Companions" and Tommaso da Celano. Strongly as we are tempted to quote at length from the interesting pages of these mediæval records, the short space at our command renders this impossible, and we must content ourselves with a few words descriptive of each fresco in the order of its sequence. For those, however, who would more fully appreciate the beauty of St. Francis' story, we recommend the reading of one or other of the various works more especially devoted to his life and deeds.[1]

The series commences at the end of the North wall, nearest the High-Altar, and the first few frescoes refer to certain significant happenings during the more youthful period of the Saint's life, previous to his final conversion.

I. "St. Francis honoured by a Citizen of Assisi." (Pl. 12.)

The simplicity and directness of arrangement and of action, in this first fresco, give us the keynote to Giotto's style throughout the series, and already show us a marked advance in conciseness and significance of representation over his work in the Lower Church. Less changed in its essential character than the majority of the paintings that follow, it still preserves a certain sense of its original appearance, despite the restoration of the

[1] For a more lengthy description of these frescoes and of the entire Church of S. Francesco, we may refer the reader to the charming volume on Assisi, by Miss Duff Gordon ("Mediæval Towns"), which has appeared since the greater part of this present work was written.

*Alinari photo*] [*Assisi, Upper Church*

ST. FRANCIS HONOURED BY A CITIZEN OF ASSISI

Plate 12

heads and of the draperies. The expressive movement of the figures is Giottesque to a degree—natural and true, and sufficient to make up for the changed expression of the faces. In the background we recognize a free copy of the Temple of Minerva—still to be seen at the present day in the *Piazza* of Assisi—in the decoration of which, Giotto has given us an excellent example of that study of the antique so noticeable in all his later works.

II. "St. Francis gives his Mantle to a Poor Man."

The stiff figure and wooden lineaments of the soldier show the effect of the restorer's work most clearly—the movement of the Saint and the realistic action of his horse have been better preserved. Full of interest, and of no slight charm, is the hilly landscape in the background, with the walled town crowning the summit to the left.

III. "The Vision of St. Francis."

Giotto has indulged his fancy to an unusual extent in his conception of the visionary palace. The figure of Christ is very truthful and natural in movement, but all idea of the original features and drapery has been lost. Again, the genius of the restorer is made most prominent in the sharp folds of the coverlet of the Saint's bed—so unlike any of Giotto's drapery.

IV. "St. Francis before the Crucifix at San Damiano."

This fresco is one of the most damaged and faded of the series, even the repaint having scaled away in parts. Very natural, and full of deep devotion, is the figure of the Saint, as he kneels in the quiet of the ruined building before the Crucifix above the altar.

V. "St. Francis renounces his Father and the World." (Pl. 13.)

Not even the brutal repainting which this fresco has undergone can hide the dramatic energy of expression that has made it, not without reason, one of the most highly praised and best known of all these paintings. It would be difficult to find among all Giotto's works a more striking example of realistic action than that shown us in the figure of the infuriated father. As usual, Giotto has chosen the most dramatic moment possible for the representation of his subject, and even in its present deplorable state we feel unconsciously drawn to share in the tense and excited interest of the spectators in the scene.

VI. "The Dream of Pope Innocent III."

The attitude of the young Saint, as he supports the falling church, is most natural and easy, and it is evident that the restorer has here more carefully followed the original. The figures of the two attendant watchers, one of them overcome by sleep, are also very true to life, although quite repainted; that of the Pope himself is not exempt from the stiffness common to almost all of Giotto's representations of reclining figures.

VII. "Pope Innocent sanctions the Rules of the Order."

This composition strikes us not only by the fine arrangement of the figures, but by the deep truthfulness of expression which pervades the whole. The sense of earnest reverence and expectation, on the part of the kneeling Saint and of his brethren, contrasts most effectively with the wondering interest of the assembled prelates. Again,

*Alinari photo*] [*Assisi, Upper Church*

THE RENUNCIATION OF ST. FRANCIS

Plate 13

the heads have been rendered hard and hideous by the work of the restorer.

VIII. "The Apparition of the Fiery Chariot."

Giotto has perhaps done both wisely and well in here acknowledging the technical limitations of his art, and in representing this rather difficult subject in a perfectly literal manner. The figures of the horses betray the master's study of classical models, and are at striking variance with his more realistic conceptions of animals in other of these frescoes.

IX. "The Vision of the Thrones."

In its present repainted state the angel in this scene is quite unlike Giotto's usual representation of such celestial beings. Very beautiful and quiet in expression is the figure of the Saint, as, lost in prayer, he kneels upon the step before the altar.

X. "The Expulsion of the Devils from Arezzo."

Full, again, of the deepest devotion is the kneeling figure of St. Francis, and very powerful and noble that of his companion Fra Silvestro, as, with a gesture of command, he rids the city of the spirits of evil which infest it. To the left is an interesting Gothic church, and in the wall above the apse are three painted bas-reliefs, the finely modelled figures of which are clearly copied from the nude *genii* of classic times.[1]

[1] It seems difficult to believe that these ornaments, so unsuitable to the building which they decorate, and so akin in spirit to the work of the later Renaissance, were not mere additions of the restorer's fancy; but a comparison of them with similar creations of Giotto's hand leaves little doubt of their having been introduced into the original fresco by the master himself.

XI. "St. Francis before the Sultan."

Ruined and changed as it is, we can still appreciate the original power of this painting. The noble and impressive figure of the Sultan, together with those of St. Francis and his companion, still retain no small amount of their former expressiveness of gesture.

XII. "The Glory of St. Francis."

This fresco has also suffered most severely. As was the case with No. VIII., Giotto did not attempt anything beyond a purely literal representation of his subject. The figure of Christ in the heavens is still most beautiful in movement and expression.

XIII. "The Christmas night at Greccio."

In the repainting of the faces the restorer has here outdone himself in his love of caricature, and has unconsciously tried his best to ruin what must once have been one of the most charming frescoes of the series. Fortunately, the movement of the various figures is still quite sufficient in itself to express what was in Giotto's mind, and we cannot remain unaffected by this work, even in its present state.

XIV. "The Miracle of the Spring." (Pl. 14.)

Vasari dwells enthusiastically upon the realistic qualities of the drinking figure in this scene, and we can quite understand his admiration of the original. But to us it is the feeling and conception of the entire work that strike us as most beautiful. Even the restorer himself seems to have felt a special reverence for this and the

*Alinari photo*] [*Assisi, Upper Church*

THE MIRACLE OF THE SPRING

Plate 14

following fresco, and both still retain much of their former beauty of expression. Very fine, and full of the deepest feeling, is the praying figure of the Saint, and very true to life those of his companions with the ass. In the background Giotto has, with no small success, sought to express the wildness of the country through which the travellers pass.

### XV. "The Sermon to the Birds."

This must once have been in many ways among the loveliest and most poetical of all Giotto's frescoes, and even at the present day its charm is by no means lost. It is difficult to conceive of this beautiful subject—so deeply characteristic of St. Francis' all-embracing love—ever receiving a more natural or sympathetic treatment; and Giotto seems here to have entered on his work with a full appreciation of its deep significance. We might look far before finding a more simple, and at the same time a more truthful and touching, example of the expressiveness of movement, than that so apparent in the action of the Saint, as, with hands outstretched, he preaches his loving message to his little "sister birds." Giotto seems here to have lavished special pains upon the painting of his trees; and in the varied forms and movements of the different birds themselves, we recognize to the full his careful observation of Nature's models.

On the wall above the door, between these last two frescoes, is a painting of the Virgin and Child—now entirely ruined by successive restorations—in all probability one of the first examples of those more naturalistic representations of the Madonna and her Son, which Giotto was destined to create as models for the imitation

of later schools and ages. Nothing of the original, however, now remains visible through the thick repaint.

XVI. "The Death of the Knight of Celano." (Pl. 15.)

The subject of this fresco seems to have been eminently suited to the dramatic tendencies of Giotto's genius, and, even in its present condition, the movements of the various figures are admirably suggestive of the surprise and grief occasioned by the sudden death of the host. With a total absence of all exaggeration, Giotto has fully succeeded in giving us a perfectly natural and deeply impressive representation of the tragic scene, remarkable alike for its sincerity of feeling and its simple truthfulness.

XVII. "St. Francis before Honorius III."

Giotto has most effectively depicted the rapt attention of the Pope and of his followers, as they listen with varied feelings of deep interest and surprise to the eloquent words of the humble speaker. Worthy of remark is the arched Gothic interior, recalling as it does similar efforts in the frescoes of the Lower Church.

XVIII. "The Apparition at Arles."

Here again the painter has well expressed the different feelings of an audience in the hooded figures of the friars. With the exception of the one brother seated to the left, all are unconscious of the tall figure of the Saint in the central doorway. Most interesting is the simple Gothic architecture of the building, with its delicate decorations of mosaic.

*Alinari photo*] [*Assisi, Upper Church*

THE DEATH OF THE KNIGHT OF CELANO

Plate 15

## XIX. "The Stigmata."

It would be superfluous to dwell upon the direct simplicity with which Giotto has treated this crowning wonder of St. Francis' life. Though artists without number have attempted since his day to paint the marvellous vision in many different ways, none can be said to have improved upon the simple force and effectiveness of Giotto's characteristic representation of the scene.

With this fresco of the Stigmatization ends Giotto's personal share in the great series, and the paintings which follow, representing the death and funeral of the Saint, together with some of his posthumous miracles, point unmistakably to the work of another hand, so marked is the difference in style between them and the frescoes which we have already examined. To us they appear most certainly to be the creations of a pupil of the master—one who, although unknown by name, was by no means the least gifted among Giotto's followers, and who has left us further examples of his talents in other parts. The affinities which exist between these paintings and those relating to the life and miracles of St. Nicholas of Bari on the walls of the Cappella del SS. Sacramento, in the Lower Church, leave little doubt in our mind as to their being by the same artist, and Mr. Berenson has further traced his peculiar manner to a well-known picture now in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence, representative of certain scenes from the life of St. Cecilia, generally attributed to Cimabue. Although one of the most faithful imitators of Giotto's style, his work still presents such visible differences as to render any confusion of the two impossible.

His figures lack Giotto's solidity of form and justness of proportions ; his heads and extremities are smaller and more attenuated, and there is a general tendency to slimness and to height, especially in the high-waisted figures of his women. In his composition, also, we miss the concise simplicity of his master.

In this hasty and unsatisfactory review of Giotto's paintings in the Upper Church, the reader will undoubtedly have missed the usual long descriptions accorded them by other writers. In their present ruined state, however, it would be as vain for us to dwell more at length upon their many merits—still so evident in themselves—as it would be unjust to judge them by what are seemingly their defects, so great have been the changes they have undergone at the restorer's hand. Concerning this question of restoration we have already said enough, and it is to be hoped that the student may by this time, in his study of Giotto's works, have acquired sufficient knowledge of the master's style to appreciate for himself the many beauties of form, composition, and expression with which these frescoes are so richly filled, and to discern between what is Giotto's own and what has followed after.

What exact reasons Giotto may have had for the sudden discontinuation of his work in the Upper Church, we have no means of knowing ; nor do we possess any certain information regarding his movements at this particular period of his life. Nothing would be more natural than that he should have frequently returned to Florence during the years in which he was engaged upon his work at Assisi, especially as we know him to have looked upon that city as his home throughout his life. With the fame that was already his, invitations would certainly never

have been lacking, both here and from other parts, for the demonstration of his skill, and it is by no means likely that all such opportunities should have been laid aside. However this may have been, we know of no visible records—with the exception of one or two panel-pictures, concerning which we will have more to say later—of any work carried out, either here at Florence or elsewhere, during this " Assisan Period."

The great majority of writers, even to the present day, have insisted in accrediting to Giotto, as a work of this particular period, the frescoes which adorn the Chapel of the Palazzo del Podestà—better known as the Bargello —at Florence. One or two of our more modern critics have, however, strongly combated the correctness of this attribution, and we certainly share the opinion of this small minority in according, not to Giotto himself, but to a pupil of the master, the execution of these works.[1] In their present ruined and repainted condition, a just critical judgment of these frescoes is rendered quite impossible. Nevertheless, from the little of the original work that still remains visible, it is clearly apparent that they once possessed merits, which, although not such as to warrant their traditional attribution to Giotto's own hand, certainly attest the work of one of the most gifted of his followers —one not only most signally successful in copying his master's style, but who seems also to have made free use

[1] Sig. Gaetano Milanesi, the celebrated archivist and editor of Vasari, was the first to oppose Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle's acceptance of these frescoes as works of Giotto's hand, and his argument—based not upon critical, but purely documental and historical foundations—is certainly in many ways a sufficiently convincing one against the possibility of Giotto's personal connection with these paintings.

of his designs. Space forbids us from entering here into a closer examination of these very interesting works, and we must leave the reader to study them in detail for himself.

Whatever may have been the truth in regard to Giotto's doings during the years immediately preceding his acceptance of the commission to decorate the Arena Chapel at Padua, it is certain that his labours at Assisi did not end with the frescoes of the Life of St. Francis; for we come upon unmistakable proofs of his handiwork in the Cappella di Sta. Maria Maddalena, in the Lower Church, the walls of which chapel are entirely covered with scenes from the life of the saint to which it is dedicated, and with figures and medallions of various other holy personages. By one of those strange chances through which some of the greatest masterpieces are at times passed over with comparative neglect, these frescoes have always been spoken of by the generality of writers with a truly remarkable insensibility to their great and obvious merits. Indeed, they have come to be looked upon as works of quite inferior importance—hardly deserving of any serious consideration—and we know of but two living critics who have of late years accorded them anything approaching the recognition which they deserve, and who have stopped to question their attribution to that most ill-defined of all Giotto's followers, Buffalmacco, to whom they are by general consent given.

To us Giotto's personal share in these important paintings seems beyond all question certain, despite the strange lack of uniformity in their style and execution, which plainly points to the co-operation, upon no small scale, of several of the master's pupils in the completion of these

*Alinari photo*] THE RAISING OF LAZARUS [*Assisi, Lower Church*

Plate 16

works, and which gives them an appearance of having been executed at different periods of time. This diversity of manner is so pronounced as to render it well-nigh impossible to clearly separate the work of Giotto himself from that of his followers and assistants. Nevertheless, the master's hand is unmistakably apparent to a greater or less degree in almost every one of the principal frescoes in this chapel, and it is somewhat difficult to understand how any one at all intimately acquainted with Giotto's work at Padua, to which they bear so close a resemblance, should fail to recognize the power and strength which lie in these much neglected paintings.

A glance at the first subject of the series—the Anointing of Christ's Feet—is sufficient to dispel all doubts as to its authorship. None but Giotto could have been capable of such a simple, and at the same time, such a deeply felt treatment of the scene. But if in this first fresco we already clearly recognize the principal characteristics of the master's Paduan style and manner, the same can be said with even greater reason of the Raising of Lazarus (Pl. 16), on the wall above it—perhaps the most powerfully effective work of Giotto's genius up to this particular point in his career. Inferior only in matter of arrangement to the master's later treatment of the same subject in the Paduan Arena, in its deep solemnity of expression, the grand dignity of its figures, and the sense of mystery and awe which overshadows the whole scene, it stands second to but few of the master's later works.

In the "Noli me Tangere," on the opposite wall, Giotto's hand is still unmistakably apparent in the exquisitely beautiful and expressive figure of the kneeling Magdalen. That of Christ is, however, inferior to the average of the

master's creations. Nevertheless, despite the evident assistance of his pupils in the execution of this work, its great beauty of sentiment and its excellence as a composition point clearly to Giotto's own large share in it. Almost entirely the work of his pupils, on the contrary—at least in regard to execution—is the fresco on the wall above, representing the Voyage of the Magdalen from Palestine to Marseilles and the Miracle of the Prince of Marseilles.

The two lunette paintings which complete the series, although differing noticeably in certain details of drapery and type from the foregoing works—owing probably to the co-operation of assistants, or even to later touches of repaint—again most certainly betoken Giotto's handiwork. Most impressive, and full of a strange attraction, is the first of these, in which the hermit priest is bringing a garment to the Penitent in the desert. In the Last Communion of the Saint (Pl. 17), on the west wall, the splendid drapery, the fine feeling for form, and the noble dignity of the figures, mark it as one of the most beautiful paintings of the series.

We again recognize the grandeur and dignity of Giotto's style in the two smaller frescoes, representing, in all probability, the donor of the chapel at the feet of the Magdalen and St. Maximin (?). In the four medallions of the ceiling, are life-sized busts of Christ, Mary Magdalen, Martha, and Lazarus ; and the wall spaces on either side of the stained glass window, and in the entrance arches, are completely filled with heads and figures of various saints—works of uneven merit, in many cases betokening their execution by pupils and assistants, but one and all worthy of attention.

*Alinari photo*] [*Assisi, Lower Church*

THE LAST COMMUNION OF THE MAGDALEN

Plate 17

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ARENA CHAPEL

THE present chapel of Sta. Maria dell' Arena, at Padua, was erected, if we may believe an inscription handed down to us by Scardeone and others, about the year 1303, by Enrico Scrovegno, or de' Scrovegni, son of a Paduan citizen of great wealth, Reginaldo by name, whose reputation for avarice and usury was so great as to secure for him the unenviable immortality of being consigned by Dante, on account of those characteristics, to the Seventh Circle of his "Inferno."

Enrico, who seems to have inherited to a less extent the miserly qualities of his parent, and to have determined to make use of the great wealth left to him in a manner that might to some degree make amends for the unhappy reputation attached to his father's name, may have deservedly merited the title of nobility which was conferred upon him by the Venetian Republic in the year 1301. Whatever may have been the nature of his character or of his good deeds, the action through which he has been accorded a fame as lasting as that of his unhappy father, was his reconstruction of the famous chapel to the Virgin which still bears his name.

In the embellishment of the new edifice he was evidently determined to spare neither trouble nor expense in procuring the most capable workmen that Italy could

afford ; and, either at the suggestion of some friend, or on account of the fame which had undoubtedly by this time accompanied Giotto's name into the most distant parts of the peninsula, as one of the greatest of living painters, that artist was chosen as the most competent person to be intrusted with the onerous task of decorating the walls of the chapel.

The inducements to accept the invitation seem to have been sufficient to have persuaded Giotto to undertake the great commission, and in all probability he had commenced work in the building when Dante visited Padua in the year 1306, at which time, according to Benvenuto da Imola, the poet was received by Giotto in his own house.

The strong impression of external bareness and severity which makes itself felt upon our first view of the building from without, is more than compensated for as the visitor enters the chapel door. Lighted by the apse, the six long Gothic windows of the right side-wall, and the large triple one above the entrance, the interior of the edifice presents a scheme of decoration such as is seldom, if ever, to be met with, even in the churches of Italy. Not a square foot of wall space has been left uncovered, and yet, with all its completeness, the decoration never once overweighs or hides the architectural proportions of the building, so that the effect is that of one harmonious whole—the realized ideal of a perfectly decorated interior.

The entire lateral walls, together with the space on either side of the great arch opening into the tribune, are occupied by parallel courses of frescoes representing scenes from the lives of the Virgin and of Christ. Below, forming a species of frieze, is a series of allegorical repre-

sentations of the Virtues and Vices. The entire entrance wall, or such of it as is not occupied by the window, is taken up, as usual, with the subject of the Last Judgment and the lunette opposite, above the arched entrance to the tribune, with that of Christ in Glory, surrounded by Angels. The ceiling, coloured in blue and studded with golden stars, is adorned with medallions of Christ, the Virgin, and various saints and prophets. Delicate ornamental designs separate the various frescoes. The tribune, containing the high-altar and the monumental tomb of Enrico Scrovegno—the work of Giovanni Pisano—is also completely covered with frescoes and decorations by followers of Giotto, belonging, however, to a later date than the works in the main body of the chapel.

The first sensation of the spectator, in the presence of this monumental work, is one of wonder and surprise at the perfect manner in which the original decorative scheme has been carried out. Nor is his admiration unjustified, for it would be difficult to cite or even to imagine any example of a decorated interior more perfectly in keeping with the architectural character of the building than is the case here. Indeed, this exceptional unity of feeling between the architectural features of the edifice and its mural adornment, is by no means one of the least of Giotto's many artistic triumphs, and has been the primary reason for the belief that he acted here in the capacity of architect as well as in that of decorator, a tradition lacking the support of probability.

The great painter must fully have appreciated the magnitude of the commission here offered him, but he no doubt gladly seized upon so favourable an occasion for a challenge to such of his contemporaries as still held

to the older traditions of mediæval art. Although he had already made good at Rome and at Assisi his claim to the proud title of the founder of a new school of art, and although Rome and Central Italy in general had been forced, ere now, to acknowledge the absolute superiority of his genius, the more northern provinces still awaited a proof of his powers. The desired opportunity had at last arrived. Never in the entire course of his career, not even at Assisi, had Giotto been offered a single commission of such dimensions as those of the present one, or one affording a more splendid occasion for the full exercise of his now mature genius. How he fulfilled the great task set before him, all who are interested in his progress and development now know, and the Arena Chapel ranks to-day as one of the greatest glories in the artistic history of Italy.

Turning to a detailed examination of the frescoes themselves, it will be well for us to take each subject in the order in which it was in all probability painted, and we may commence our review with the first scene in the series relating to the life of the Virgin, high up on the right-hand wall, nearest the tribune.[1] Here Giotto has represented (I.) the Rejection of Joachim's Offering. In this first work we become at once acquainted with that grandeur and simplicity of style which mark the entire

[1] In our notice of these works, we shall limit our remarks to as few words as possible, and earnestly recommend the reader to carefully read the interesting account of the Chapel and its decorations, given us by Mr. Ruskin in his "Giotto and his works at Padua." To attempt to improve, or even to enlarge upon what Mr. Ruskin has already so beautifully and correctly said in regard to these frescoes, would be to draw forth a comparison as unnecessary as it would be unfavourable to ourselves.

series of frescoes. In the paucity of architectural detail, and the entire absence of all figures and accessories not having a direct connection with the subject to be represented, we find Giotto finally realizing to the full those ideals of conciseness and simplicity already apparent, to a lesser degree, in the later frescoes at Assisi. In the plastic grandeur and severity of form, the broad simplicity of drapery, the directness of movement and expression, and the compressed significance of the smallest detail, we recognize the most essential and characteristic qualities of Giotto's genius—qualities which are broadly manifest in every fresco which goes to make up this wonderful sequence of paintings. We need but cast a single glance at this first subject to realize the progress made by the master in the gradual perfection of all these characteristics of his art. His never-failing sense of dramatic effect, again, is at once apparent in the contrast between the two pairs of figures, the conflicting emotions which move the two principal actors in the scene being strongly set off by the quiet of the two minor personages within the screen of the Temple, where the priest is in the act of accepting the offering of a second worshipper. The whole scene, simply portrayed as it is, forms a drama in itself, the hidden passion of which cannot fail to make itself felt; and it is to this same deep sense of the tragedy and passion of the human heart that Giotto owes so much of that mysterious power which he wields over us in his representations of what may often, at first sight, appear but matters of everyday import.

Fine as it is, however, this fresco is far surpassed in beauty and depth of feeling by the one following (II.), in which Joachim is depicted as returning from the Temple

to his Sheep-folds in the hill country (Pl. 18). With bowed head, his eyes bent upon the ground, he moves slowly forward, sorrowful and depressed by the words of the High Priest and their all too evident truth, utterly unconscious of all his surroundings. In its quiet dignity and grandeur, this noble figure remains unsurpassed by the work of any Christian artist before or after Giotto's time, and stands before us as a lasting memorial of what the great painter's genius was capable of in the matter of expression, as conveyed by attitude and movement, as well as by cast of countenance. Again, the reality of the whole scene cannot fail to impress itself deeply upon our memory. The contrasting figures, the joyful greeting of the dog, so natural in its movement as it leaps up before its master, the sense of the wilderness expressed so simply and yet with such unfailing effect by the cliffed mountains and a few scattered trees—all are touches of masterly power on the part of the artist. Even the feeling for beauty, at times so conspicuous by its apparent absence in some of Giotto's later works, is here by no means lacking.

III. The Angel appears to St. Anna.

This fresco is again most Giottesque in its simplicity of conception. The sweeping flight of the angel, as it passes through the open window, is beautifully carried out, and the kneeling figure of St. Anna is a very noble one. In the outer entrance, her maid sits weaving—most natural in action. Giotto's masterly use of light and shade in this painting has been justly commented upon by Mr. Ruskin.

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

JOACHIM RETURNING TO HIS SHEEPFOLDS

Plate 18

### IV. Joachim's Sacrifice.

Giotto has invested this subject with an indefinable sense of mystery, which is enhanced by the wild and desolate aspect of the landscape. Most expressive is the figure of Joachim, as he gazes with awe and wonder at the apparition of the angel. The vague form of a winged spirit floats upward in the smoke of the burning sacrifice. In interesting contrast to these supernatural elements in the scene, is the group of goats and sheep in the foreground.

### V. The Angel announces the Birth of the Virgin to Joachim. (Pl. 19.)

This is another most characteristic work of the painter. It is impossible to escape the sense of wildness and space produced by the background of cliffs and the precipitous hill to the right; and Giotto here shows no slight knowledge of the secrets of aerial perspective.

### VI. The Meeting of Anna and Joachim at the Golden Gate.

Most lovely is the action and expression of the two principal figures in this scene, as they embrace each other on the bridge before the gate of the city. The apparent ugliness of some of the women's faces is due principally to restoration.[1]

[1] The frescoes of the Arena Chapel have been more fortunate than the majority of Giotto's later works in the treatment they have received. Despite decided protestations to the contrary, however, the handiwork of the restorer is far too evident to escape detection by a practised eye. Almost all the paintings have been, to a certain extent, retouched, and, as usual, the repaint is most noticeable in

VII. The Birth of the Virgin.

Again quite a simple and realistic representation of the scene. Giotto still keeps to the prevalent custom of the time, in depicting simultaneously two different episodes relating to the same subject, and in the foreground we find two women engaged in washing and swaddling the newborn child. The graceful figure of the servant, without the door, involuntarily calls up before us the later creations of Fra Angelico.

VIII. The Presentation in the Temple.

A very beautiful composition, and full of varied interest and expression. The figure of the High Priest is most gravely dignified and noble. Very noticeable, also, is the splendid head of the white-haired patriarch who stands beside St. Joseph.

IX. The Bringing of the Rods to the High Priest.

Although not lacking in beauty of arrangement, this fresco is entirely eclipsed in interest by the one which follows after.

X. The Watching of the Rods.

Here the figures of the priest and the various suitors, grouped as they are about the altar, express, to an admirable degree, the tense expectation of the anxious watchers. The arrangement of the figures, and the pecu-

the heads of many of the figures. On the whole, however, the restorer has done his duty conscientiously, and has kept the spirit of Giotto's work well in mind, so that the original effect has not been ruined, as has been the case in the Upper Church at Assisi and in Santa Croce at Florence.

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

THE ANGEL APPEARS TO JOACHIM

Plate 19

liarly horizontal tendency of the entire composition, are strikingly impressive.

XI. The Marriage of the Virgin.

Very simply and beautifully composed. The young and girlish figure of the Virgin contrasts strongly with the older but manly one of St. Joseph. Full of the deepest feeling and expression is the figure of the youth to the left, in the act of breaking his rod across his knee. The quiet solemnity of the whole scene is broken only by the action of the young man who stands with raised hand behind the chosen bridegroom.

XII. The Return of the Virgin to her Home.

It would be difficult to describe in words the deep sense of calm solemnity expressed in this truly wonderful composition. The simple majesty of the different figures, and the striking effect of slow and measured movement imparted by the entire procession, are points to which the spectator's attention cannot be too often called; and we know of no existing work in which this same rhythmic sense of movement has been more perfectly expressed. Fortunately, although much damaged, this work is also one of the least repainted of the series.

XIII. and XIV. The Annunciation.

Giotto has divided this fresco—the connecting link of the two series of subjects relating to the lives of the Virgin and her Divine Son—between the spaces on either side of the arch opening into the tribune. The figure of the angel is of a divine majesty, as, with hand outstretched in benediction, he announces his heavenly

message. In his left hand he holds a scroll, in place of the customary lilies. The Virgin—a more fully developed figure than in the preceding scenes—is most beautiful and dignified. In neither case is there any effort at exaggerated or theatrical action, and the whole scene is imbued with a deep sense of that dignity and calm in which it must have been enacted.

### XV. The Visitation.

Wonderfully simple and effective again, in the limited number of figures and almost total absence of accessories, either architectural or otherwise, Giotto has given us in this painting a striking example of his great powers of concentration. A comparison of this and the following frescoes with the representations of the same subjects at Assisi, will be of the greatest advantage to the student, in affording him an excellent opportunity for the study of the changes which had taken place in Giotto's manner.

### XVI. The Nativity of Christ. (Pl. 20.)

The first of the second tier of frescoes on the right wall—a very beautiful work, full of the deepest human sentiment and feeling. Upon comparing it with the fresco at Assisi, the painter's progress in his ideals of simplicity and naturalism is apparent at a glance, Giotto having here reduced both the participants in the scene and the action itself, to the simplest possible limits. The traditional incident of the washing of the Child has been entirely done away with, and in its stead the Infant, already washed and swathed, is being presented to Its mother, who, rising on her mattress, looks down with the deepest tenderness upon the new-born Saviour.

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

THE NATIVITY

Plate 20

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

Plate 21

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

Plate 22

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Plate 23

XVII. The Adoration of the Magi. (Pl. 21.)

In the general arrangement of this beautiful fresco Giotto has not essentially departed from his representation of the same subject at Assisi. The later work has gained, however, both in conciseness and simplicity.

XVIII. The Presentation in the Temple. (Pl. 22.)

Very striking, again, is the simplicity of this scene as compared with the earlier and more elaborate painting in the Lower Church at Assisi. Giotto, as usual, has sought to represent the subject in as natural a manner as possible, and he has been singularly successful in the child-like action of the little Christ, as He turns from the loving embrace of Simeon toward the outstretched arms of the Virgin.

XIX. The Flight into Egypt. (Pl. 23.)

This beautiful work is surely to be classed in the list of Giotto's masterpieces, and it would be difficult to imagine a more perfect representation of the subject than that which the painter has here given us. As in the fresco at Assisi, we find the same sense of wildness and solitude most ably expressed in the simple landscape background. In the matter of composition the little processional group could hardly be better arranged, and both in movement and expression each figure is admirable to a degree.

XX. The Massacre of the Innocents.

Inferior as a whole to the painting at Assisi. A comparison of this work with Giovanni Pisano's treatment of the same subject is most interesting, as clearly showing

how far Giotto still remained behind that master in the depiction of violent movement and spontaneous action.

XXI. Christ and the Doctors in the Temple.

A very quiet composition, the most damaged of the entire series, although comparatively free from restoration.[1]

XXII. The Baptism of Christ.

Giotto has here held closely to the traditional Byzantine treatment of this subject. The splendid figure of the old disciple behind St. John probably represents St. Andrew. Very beautiful in expression is the group of attendant angels on the opposite bank.

XXIII. The Marriage at Cana.

Apart from its originality of conception, this fine fresco is an excellent example of Giotto's powers in the simple and naturalistic treatment of an unusually difficult subject. The characterization of the different personages in the scene calls for especial remark, and some of the heads are of great individual beauty. Giotto's study of natural movement is particularly apparent in the realistic figure engaged in filling the classic *amphoræ* to the right.

XXIV. The Raising of Lazarus.

A strikingly dramatic work in Giotto's grandest style.

[1] Giotto has here replaced the Gothic background of his Assisan period by one of a Byzantine character. This change in the style of his architectural settings is an interesting one, and due, perhaps, in no small measure, to the near proximity of Venice with its monumental Byzantine church of St. Mark, with which building Giotto seems to have been well acquainted.

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

Plate 24

We have already spoken of this fresco in comparison with the painter's representation of the same subject in the chapel of the Magdalen at Assisi, which work it undoubtedly surpasses in composition and naturalistic vigour of expression. Giotto's sense of plastic values is most strongly evident in the swathed form of Lazarus.

XXV. The Entry into Jerusalem. (Pl. 24.)

Another admirable example of Giotto's exceptional powers in the expression of slow and measured movement. Very noble and fine are the figures and heads of Christ and of the foremost of the Apostles. The ass and the head of her foal are among the best representations of animals which we have from the painter's hand.

XXVI. The Expulsion from the Temple.

Not so successful as many of the preceding frescoes, owing in part, no doubt, to the necessity for the realization of violent action. The figure of the disciple sheltering the frightened child beneath his mantle, to the extreme left, is masterly in its truth of action. Very interesting are the lions and horses which surmount the pilasters of the *loggia*—the latter unmistakably copied from the famous *quadriga* of St. Mark's at Venice.

XXVII. The Hiring of Judas.

Despite its vastly different subject, this fresco may be said to rank with that of the Visitation in its simplicity and conciseness. The sense of mingled secrecy and fear, on the part of the two principal personages in the scene, is most strikingly expressed in their faces and their movements.

XXVIII. The Last Supper.

With his usual innate artistic sense of truth, Giotto has here made no attempt to distinguish Judas from the rest of the company by any of those base or vulgar characteristics with which the painters of a later period invariably endeavour to stamp his personality, and he still bears the halo together with the other Apostles.

XXIX. The Washing of the Feet. (Pl. 25.)

This subject, so seldom touched upon by later artists, has been here most beautifully treated by Giotto. The figure of Christ is very beautiful in attitude and gesture, and the varied feelings of the different disciples are aptly depicted in their faces. Wonderfully fine is the splendid figure of the old Apostle lacing his sandal in the foreground to the left.

XXX. The Betrayal.

Although avoiding, as usual, all exaggerated violence of action, Giotto has fully succeeded in representing the turbulent passion of the mob in this dramatic scene. In striking contrast to the vulgarity of His assailants, is the calmly dignified figure of Christ. To the left, the painter has attempted to depict, in as natural a manner as possible, the conventional episode of St. Peter cutting off the ear of Malchus.

XXXI. Christ brought before Caiaphas.

Here, as in the preceding fresco, the calm figure of Christ stands out in noble relief against the background of passion and disorder.

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

THE WASHING OF THE FEET

Plate 25

XXXII. The Scourging of Christ.

Giotto has succeeded admirably in representing the coarse brutality of Christ's persecutors. Strongly at variance with the work of later ages is the expression of patient resignation on the part of the Saviour Himself.

XXXIII. The Way to Golgotha.

Most dramatic is Giotto's treatment of this scene. The attention is at once fixed upon the figure of Christ, as He looks backward toward His agonized mother, who strives in vain to reach Him.

XXXIV. The Crucifixion.

This fresco naturally provokes at once a comparison with Giotto's earlier representation of the subject at Assisi —nor can we say that the painter has, upon the whole, surpassed his former effort. How far such a comparison is just or legitimate, however, it is difficult to say, as the spirit in which the two works are conceived seems to differ in both cases in no slight degree. Whereas the fresco at Assisi is marked by a far greater depth of spiritual significance and feeling, in this later representation at Padua we are plainly conscious of the artist's desire to treat the subject in as naturalistic a manner as possible. To some temperaments more than to others, this Paduan work may appeal as being the preferable of the two ; to our own mind, however, the superiority of the earlier conception remains unquestionable.

XXXV. The Entombment. (Pl. 26.)

This beautiful composition has justly been awarded no small amount of praise by all admirers of Giotto's art,

and even the most indifferent observer cannot fail to be impressed by the passionate intensity of the scene. Here, as in the preceding fresco of the Crucifixion, the rapid movement of the angels, as they wheel and circle through the air in a frenzied agony of grief, is most wonderfully expressed. The barren hill, and the bare and leafless branches of the tree, thrown out against the darkening sky, add strangely to the solemnity of the scene.

### XXXVI. The Resurrection. (Pl. 27.)

It is quite beyond our power even to attempt a description of this most wonderful fresco, and we must refer the reader to the annexed illustration for anything resembling an adequate idea of its many beauties. The noble figure of Christ is certainly one of the most beautiful conceptions of the Redeemer ever given us by Giotto. Admirable beyond all words is the manner in which the mingled feelings of wonder, love, and longing, are expressed in the raised head, the movement of the body, and the outstretched hands of the kneeling Magdalen. Most striking again, is the contrast between the majestic white-robed angels and the sleeping figures of the guards, as they lie grouped against the tomb, heavily unconscious of the celestial presence near them. Giotto's conscientious care in the execution of the smallest details is clearly visible in the careful painting of the plants which spring up about Christ's feet.

### XXXVII. The Ascension.

Very grand and beautiful is the upward sweep of the figure of Christ and of the accompanying choirs of saints

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

THE ENTOMBMENT

Plate 26

and angels. The more slowly moving figures of the two angels which follow after, seem set between the lightness of the heavenly company above and the earth-bound heaviness of those below. Very fine is the kneeling figure of the Virgin, and equally beautiful in expression those of the various disciples, as they watch the departing figure of their Lord.

### XXXVIII. The Descent of the Holy Spirit.

Most peaceful and quiet in general effect. This fresco is the last of the series on the lateral walls.

In the lunette above the entrance to the tribune, Giotto painted what was undoubtedly intended to represent Christ Enthroned in Glory, surrounded by attendant angels. The central figure in this fresco is now so darkened and damaged as to be scarcely distinguishable from below, although upon close examination we may yet make out its general attitude and form. Many of the heads and figures of the accompanying angels are of great beauty of expression, but the whole work has suffered too severely for us to judge rightly even of its original effect as a composition.

We may now turn to what is at once the grandest and most monumental, if, at the same time, one of the least known of all Giotto's works—the great fresco of the Last Judgment (Pl. 28). The immensity of this majestic work, covering as it does the entire surface of the entrance wall, renders impossible any adequate description of its manifold beauties; nor do any reproductions or engravings exist through which the student may gain anything

beyond a mere general idea of its composition and arrangement.[1] A few words must therefore suffice to indicate the plan of Giotto's conception of this colossal subject.

In a glory of the colours of the rainbow, in the centre of the painting, sits the Divine Judge, hieratic and supreme, simply clad and without a crown, His right hand outstretched toward the army of the Just in a gesture of approval, His left turned down against the condemned souls of the Wicked. The glory which encircles Him is supported by twelve beautiful long-winged angels, four of whom announce the coming of the Final Judgment through the great trumpets which they hold. To right and left, on either side, sit the Twelve Apostles, each on his separate throne, and above them soar the mighty hosts of Heaven, with banners, swords, and lilies. Below the enthroned figure of the Judge, two great angels support the Cross of Redemption, at the foot of which is seen the kneeling figure of Enrico Scrovegno, in the act of presenting to three saintly beings, of truly heavenly beauty, the model of his chapel, borne on the shoulders of a monk. To the left, headed by the beautiful figure of the Virgin, herself surrounded by a glory supported by attendant angels, comes the gathering of the Saints and Martyrs, the Doctors and the Prophets. Below them, in another zone, are the arisen figures of the Just, led on by their angelic guardians, while, yet lower

[1] Sufficient blame cannot be attached to the Paduan authorities for preventing, as they have done, the publication of a satisfactory series of photographs of these great frescoes—the present limited reproductions sold by them being quite insufficient for purposes of serious study.

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

THE RESURRECTION

Plate 27

down, the dead still rise from out their graves. To the right, the entire lower division of the fresco is given up to the representation of Hell, the flames of which proceed from beneath the feet of Christ. At the bottom of this fiery region of the damned, sits the monstrous and gigantic figure of Lucifer, and about him the lost souls of the wicked undergo the hideous tortures common to the generality of such representations of the scene.

We must once more accentuate the utter impossibility of any adequate description of the countless beauties to be found in this truly marvellous work—a summary, as it may rightly be considered, of all Giotto's great and varied powers. Indeed, a careful study of this wonderful creation might easily afford material sufficient for an entire volume of the size of this present monograph, and in his examination of the numberless details which this work contains, the student might find ample opportunity for the study of every phase of Giotto's genius.

It will be unnecessary for us to here dilate upon the comparative perfection, both technical and otherwise, arrived at by Giotto in this great series of paintings, the progress and development of his art being far too evident, possibly to escape the notice of even the most casual observer among those who have followed us in our examination of the master's earlier works.[1] Here at Padua we find carried to the utmost possible limits, those

[1] It will be unnecessary for us to here remark upon the share taken by Giotto's pupils in the execution of these works. As was the custom among painters of his day, the master was undoubtedly surrounded by assistants during the execution of all his larger fresco paintings.

efforts toward conciseness of representation and arrangement already so noticeable in Giotto's earlier creations, and in this respect these frescoes mark a culminating epoch in the artist's great career. In charm of colour and in abstract beauty, as in poetic delicacy of feeling, they may indeed be said to fall below the enchanting paintings in the Lower Church of S. Francis at Assisi, but Giotto has replaced those softer qualities with a monumental grandeur and dignity of style and of conception, which stamp these later works as unique, raising them at once above all criticism or comparison.

Unsurpassed as they are in splendid development of form, and in truthful effectiveness of movement and expression, it is perhaps not so much in their possession of these qualities—common, in a greater or a less degree to all of Giotto's work—as in their grand simplicity and beauty of composition, that these frescoes of the Arena Chapel stand out most strongly against the work of the master's earlier years. Although a thorough knowledge of pre-Giottesque art is essential to a true appreciation of the changes and innovations effected by Giotto in the treatment of his various subjects, it requires no very extraordinary degree of artistic understanding on the part of the student to recognize, at a single glance, the comparative perfection of distribution and design so apparent throughout the entire series. Despite the fact that, in the majority of his subjects, Giotto has not here departed from the fundamental arrangement of the traditional Byzantine compositions, the vital transformation which the ancient designs underwent at his hands is at once apparent to all who will spare the time necessary to a comparison of these frescoes with the older treatment

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

Plate 28

of the same scenes by the artists of the Byzantine and Latin schools.[1] In this great series of paintings at Padua, Giotto may truly be said not only to have perfected the iconography of Byzantium and the Middle Ages, but to have permanently fixed the laws of religious composition for the centuries that were to follow—and in this one respect alone, apart from all other claims to greatness, there is sufficient reason that his name should be handed down through all the ages as one of the first and greatest of all modern Christian artists.

[1] An excellent example for such a comparison—to mention but one of many similar works—is to be found in the bronze portals of the cathedral of Benevento, in Southern Italy. These remarkably fine doors, Byzantine products of the middle of the Twelfth Century, contain no less than forty-three subjects from the life of Christ, thus affording us an exceptional opportunity for comparing them with Giotto's treatment of a great number of the same.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ALLEGORICAL SCENES AT PADUA

IF Giotto may be said to have exhibited his greatest gifts as a painter in the foregoing frescoes, he has given us no less striking an example of his intellectual powers in the series of allegorical figures representative of the seven Virtues and their opposite Vices, which form a species of monochrome border below the paintings on the lateral walls. In these extraordinary works, executed in the master's most monumental style, we have, even more than in the famous Allegories at Assisi, what may be considered almost entirely the outcome of Giotto's individual invention—a series of symbolic representations affording a perhaps unequalled opportunity for the appreciation of those concise and significant qualities of the great artist's genius, concerning which we have so often spoken. Although the natural tendencies of Giotto's talent toward the representation of dramatic and historical scenes had here, of necessity, to be put aside in order to make way for a freer use of his vivid, yet ever healthful, imagination and suggestiveness, the remarkable simplicity and directness of his symbolism are visible proofs of the versatility, as well as of the sanity and freshness, of his intellect. Not only did he here produce a work possessed of far more than ordinary artistic merit, but he succeeded also in formulating a series of allegorical

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

JUSTICE

Plate 29

representations which, on account of their powerful significance of imagery, were handed down by his successors to take their place in the art of the succeeding centuries as generally accepted types, incapable of improvement, of those abstract qualities which they were intended to symbolize.[1]

Beginning nearest the entrance door with the first number of the series, we have Giotto's pictorial idea of *Hope*, which figure, although entirely painted over at a comparatively recent date, still reveals its originally classic drapery and form. Nowhere is Giotto's admiration of the antique more evident than in this charming figure, which seems almost to have been copied from some old Roman bas-relief. Clad in the classic Grecian *peplos*, her hair bound up in a manner according with her costume, winged and girdled, she might be taken for an ancient Victory but for her attitude of quiet adoration, as she floats upwards to receive the crown held out to her by an angel from above.

Facing her, on the opposite wall, is her contrary Vice, *Despair*, the tall figure of a woman, with flowing and dishevelled hair, hanging by her neck from a bar above her, her hands clenched and face contracted in the last agonies of death, while the black form of a fiend flies down to possess himself of her lost soul.

*Charity*, the next of the Virtues, does not differ essen-

[1] A comparison of these figures with those representing the same subjects in the works of the Pisani and other earlier artists, is both interesting and instructive, as showing the originality of Giotto's genius, for, although he may have been to a certain extent influenced by these early models in the formation of his own conceptions, this very indebtedness serves but to accentuate his own merits as an inventor.

tially from Giotto's earlier conception of the same personage at Assisi. Clad in the same fashion as her sister Hope, her head crowned with roses, she treads upon the money-bags of Avarice and Greed. With her left hand she offers to her Lord her heart; in her right she carries a bowl of flowers and fruit, symbolic of the heavenly bounty which is hers to distribute here on earth. Opposite her, in a flaming fire, stands the hideous figure of *Envy*, with horns and bat-like ears, a serpent issuing from her mouth which turns to bite her. Her hands are armed with claws; one is outstretched in a gesture of grasping greed, the other tightly holds a bag of gold.

*Faith*, a tall figure clad in churchly garments, the key of Heaven hanging at her waist, stands upon a heap of cabalistic books. In her right hand she holds the Cross, in the left a scroll on which are written the first words of the Creed. *Infidelity*, a heavily-draped figure of a man, stands unsteadily before a fire, bearing in his hand the small image of a woman to which is attached a cord ending in a noose about his neck. Above, a reverend figure of a prophet or Evangelist holds out to him a scroll which is kept from his eyes by the broad-brimmed helmet which he wears.

*Justice* and *Injustice* (Pls. 29, 30) come next in order—perhaps the finest of the series. The first of these, a splendid figure with crown and mantle, is seated on a Gothic throne, bearing in her hands the dishes of a pair of scales. In one of these a small winged figure is crowning a man at work at a small table, in the other an executioner is beheading a malefactor. Below, on the face of the throne, is a painted bas-relief representing the

[*Arena Chapel, Padua*

INJUSTICE

Plate 30

beneficial results of Justice and the public safety derived therefrom. To the left, two noblemen ride forth to the chase, accompanied by their dogs. The splendid horse of the foremost one is again undoubtedly copied from the *quadriga* of St. Mark's. In the centre, a figure is engaged in dancing to the accompaniment of castanets and a tambourine played by two girls. To the right are two more riders. Confronting this fine work is Giotto's representation of *Injustice*. Dressed in the costume of a noble, he sits in the arched entrance of a ruined tower in the middle of a wood. His features are sharp and angular, his expression at once cruel and keen, watchful as a bird of prey. His right hand grasps a hooked halberd, expressive as his own claw-like talons of rapacity and greed; his left touches the hilt of his sword. In the lonely wood below a scene of robbery and violence is taking place. To the left, the murdered body of a man lies beneath the hoofs of his plunging steed; near by, two men rob a woman of her garments, while others stand by keeping watch and guard. Wonderfully fine in its naturalistic treatment of movement is this little scene—a splendid example of Giotto's careful study of nature, as well as of his technical powers of reproduction.

*Temperance*—a tall and graceful figure, a bridle in her mouth—is engaged in binding the hilt of a sword to its scabbard. Opposite to her is *Wrath*, her head thrown back in an excess of fury, as she tears open her garments in the violence of her passion.

In his representation of *Fortitude*, Giotto has deviated less than usual from the conception of his predecessors. Clad in a breastplate and a lion's skin, a sharp four-

edged mace in her hand, she stands on guard behind her tall and tower-like shield. *Inconstancy*, her opposite, is depicted as falling from a rolling wheel or globe.

*Prudence* and *Folly* bring the series to a close. The first of these does not differ from Giotto's representation of her at Assisi—Janus-headed, and seated at a desk, she gazes into the polished mirror of Truth. *Folly*, a male figure of coarse and vulgar proportions, clad in a fantastic dress, and crowned with feathers, holds aloft a heavy club.

## CHAPTER IX

### LATER WORKS

IF the history of Giotto's earlier life may be said to rest beneath a cloud, we have at least been able to account for his presence in Rome and at Assisi during the greater part of the ten years preceding his acceptance of the commission to decorate the chapel of the Paduan Arena.[1] With the completion of this great work, however, commences a period of nearly twenty years duration which remains to us a sealed chapter in the story of the master's life. We do not possess as much as a single document or record of sufficient importance to throw any real light upon the manner in which these years were spent, or to determine in any way the truth regarding the various journeyings which the painter is said to have undertaken during this lengthy space of time. Even in the matter of existing works, we possess relatively little in comparison with the length of time covered by this period—by no means sufficient, in fact, to

[1] That Giotto had already painted in the Communal Palace and the Chapel of the Arena at Padua—and also, to all appearances, in the town of Rimini—previous to 1312, is made clear to us by a little known chronicle of that year from the pen of Riccobaldo Ferrarese. This invaluable record—the only contemporary notice of Giotto's doings at this particular period of his life—settles finally the question as to the approximate date of the Arena frescoes.

account for more than a small fraction of these obscure years.

How long Giotto may have remained in Northern Italy, after the completion of the frescoes in the Arena Chapel, we have no means of ascertaining. That the fame which these great works must surely have brought him should have led to various other commissions, both at Padua and elsewhere, is certain; and there is undoubtedly some foundation of truth to Vasari's statement that he painted important works at Verona, Ferrara, and Ravenna, as well as in Padua. Unfortunately, the hopeless chronological confusion and the utter disregard of historical exactness which characterize Vasari's narrative, render it impossible for us to depend upon his words, which here, as elsewhere, must be accepted only with all due allowances for the inventive genius of their author. In regard to Giotto's work at Padua, more especially, he seems exceptionally confused. According to his record of events, the great painter paid two visits to this city at distinctly different periods—one almost immediately after his return, in 1316, from an imaginary sojourn of some ten years' duration in Avignon and other parts of France;[1] another, shortly before his death in 1336. In his account of the first of these two visits, Vasari makes no mention whatever either of Scrovegno or his chapel,

[1] After having spoken at length concerning Giotto's extraordinary activity in Rome, Vasari tells us that, Clement V. having been created Pope on the death of Benedict IX. (*i.e.*, Benedict XI.), Giotto was obliged to accompany that pontiff to Avignon, in which city, and in other parts of France, he painted many wonderful works, returning to Florence in 1316, "not less rich than honoured and famous. As the seat of the Papacy was transferred to Avignon in 1306, Giotto's stay in France would of necessity have dated from

and satisfies us with the knowledge that Giotto, having been called to Padua at the instance of the Signori della Scala, painted a most beautiful chapel—"*una bellissima cappella*"—in the church of S. Antonio. Whether Messer Giorgio may have had in mind—as was later the case with Baldinucci—the Cappella di S. Jacopo, with its frescoes by Altichieri and Avanzi, or some other chapel within the main church, it is impossible to say, but there exists to the present day what once must certainly have been "a most beautiful chapel," still used as the chapter-house of the church, wherein we may look upon the ruined remnants of a series of frescoes which clearly bespeak, in part at least, the work of Giotto's brush. Sadly damaged and repainted, as a natural result of the various architectural changes which the chapel has undergone, as well as of the succession of fires to which it has been subject on no less than three different occasions, the fragments that have been left to us of the original decorations afford little more than a few general indications of their former style and manner. Vague as these indications may be, however, they are sufficiently convincing to confirm the identity of their origin, and we clearly recognize Giotto's own hand in the row of mutilated saints along the two end walls. In general style these figures still closely resemble those of the Arena Chapel, although their greater grandeur and severity, and their monumental dignity of pose, would point to their having been executed during a somewhat later period of the

that year. We find, therefore, a period of no less than ten whole years in the painter's life most easily accounted for by Vasari through the invention or adoption of a legend, upon the plausibility of which we need waste no serious comment.

master's development. Unhappily, all further discussion of their merits is rendered impossible owing to the deplorable state to which they have been reduced.[1]

The frescoes in this chapter-house may well have been among the "many other things and chapels" which, Vasari tells us, were painted by Giotto during his second visit to Padua, at which time, we are given to understand, he also executed a *Gloria mondana*, in the "Place of the Arena,"[2] which work "brought him much honour and benefit." The tradition that Giotto painted in the great Sala della Ragione of the Palazzo Comunale, seems to be confirmed by a passage in the chronicle of Riccobaldo Ferrarese, to which we have alluded in a note. No traces of the master's handiwork, however, are to be found at the present day among the endless frescoes which adorn the walls of this vast hall.

If we may believe Vasari, Giotto painted for Messer Cane (Can Grande della Scala), and for the friars of S. Francesco in Verona, and, later, in Ferrara, for the House

[1] The upper part of the lateral wall seems to have been decorated with scenes from the life of St. Francis. Of these, the fragmentary remains of two subjects—St. Francis receiving the Stigmata, and the Martyrdom of the Franciscan Brethren in Morocco—are still visible—together with a small Annunciation above a painted archway in the course below. Although possibly executed under Giotto's personal supervision, these works point unmistakably to the handiwork of pupils.

[2] In this single mention of the paintings in the Arena Chapel, Vasari undoubtedly refers to the fresco of the Last Judgment. We also have it, on the older authority of Ghiberti, that Giotto painted a *Gloria mondana* in the church of the Arena, as well as an Allegory of the Christian Faith in the Palagio della Parte (Palazzo del Comune), and many other things in that same palace and in the church and convent of S. Antonio.

of Este. The works which he executed in this latter town, in the palace of the Este family and in the church of S. Agostino, were still to be seen, the historian tells us, in his own day. Needless to remark, nothing now remains to prove the correctness of this assertion.

It was during his stay at Ferrara, Vasari goes on to say, that Giotto was invited to Ravenna by Francesco da Polenta, at the suggestion of Dante Alighieri, who was a guest of that nobleman at the time. Whether there be any truth in this tradition, it is impossible to say, for we do not find it corroborated by any of the early chroniclers. Nevertheless, the picture of the meeting of the two great Florentines, during these closing years of Dante's life,[1] is one far too temptingly affecting to be easily put aside by the majority of modern writers; and, indeed, nothing would have been more natural than that Giotto should have gladly seized upon such an opportunity for renewing the friendship of early years, and once more enjoying the company of the exiled poet, his compatriot; nor would the pleasure have been less on Dante's own part. However this may really have been, there seems little reason to doubt Giotto's presence in Ravenna during some period of his life, although nothing now remains of his own handiwork in either of the two churches in which Vasari tells us he once painted. The much repainted ceiling frescoes in one of the side chapels of S. Giovanni Evangelista, which are still accepted by most critics as creations of Giotto's brush, point rather to the work of one of the more talented of his many followers. Nor is this the only Giottesque work to be found in

[1] Dante was at Ravenna during the greater part of the last four years of his life, and died in that city on September 14th, 1321.

Ravenna and its neighbourhood, where numerous frescoes by other of the master's followers bear evidence to the strong influence which he brought to bear upon the painters of these parts.

From Ravenna, Vasari takes the subject of his biography back to Florence by way of Urbino and Arezzo, painting as he goes. Strange to say, the town of Rimini is left out of the present tour, to be visited by the master at a later period, on his return from Naples(?), when, Vasari tells us, he painted in the church of S. Francesco "very many things," which were destroyed during the remodelling of that building by Sigismondo Malatesta. "He painted also in the cloister of that place the story of the Beata Michelina; which was one of the most beautiful and excellent things that Giotto ever made." Two closely printed pages follow this latter statement, in which Vasari gives full vent to his enthusiastic admiration for these works, describing them with a care and minuteness which he bestows to a like extent upon no other of the many creations which he attributes to the master. The paintings in question are now under whitewash, and we of the present day are no longer able to enjoy their undoubted merits; but it is unfortunate for Vasari's reputation as a critic of Giotto's style, that the subject of the series, the Beata Michelina of Pesaro, is known to have died some twenty years after that great master had passed away from the scene of his earthly labours. That Giotto really did work in Rimini, however, seems almost certain from a passage in that same record of Riccobaldo Ferrarese, which we have already had reason to quote on two occasions.[1]

[1] The passage in question is worded as follows: "*Zotus pictor*

Once returned to Florence, Giotto is not given much time by his biographer for rest, and although, as usual, he "painted many things," immediately upon his arrival in that city, in 1322 we find him in Lucca working for Castruccio, lord and ruler of that town, and shortly afterwards in Naples with King Robert. After having executed a vast number of works in this last-named city, as well as in Gaëta, Rimini and Ravenna, Vasari brings him back again to Florence some time before 1327, in which year we find him called upon to supply a design for the tomb of Guido Tarlati, the warlike Bishop of Arezzo.

So much for Vasari's wonderful narrative of Giotto's movements, and of the herculean labours accomplished by that painter during this somewhat limited period of his life. Whether Giotto really made more than one visit to Padua and its neighbourhood during these years of his activity, or if, as we are told by Michele Savonarola, in that writer's "De Laudibus Patavii,"[1] he really made that town his headquarters for a lengthy period of time, we have no means of determining. Certain it is, however, that sooner or later he must have returned to his beloved Florence, where he doubtless spent a goodly number of years, previous to his famous journey to Naples, which could not have taken place, despite Vasari's statement to the contrary, until considerably after 1327. Of the many works which he is said to have

*eximius Florentinus agnoscitur qualis in arte fuerit. Testantur opera facta per eum in ecclesiis Minorum Assissii, Arimini, Paduae, et ea quae pinxit in Palatio Communis Paduae, et in ecclesia Arenae Paduae.*"

[1] Published in 1440. "*Et tantum dignitas Civitatis eum commovit, ut maximam suae vitae partem in ea consummavit.*"

painted during different periods of his life, in this his adopted city, a single altar-piece and two sadly damaged series of frescoes are all that now remain to tell the tale of those long years of steady toil and labour; and to the Florentines themselves belongs the glory of having wantonly destroyed the grand creations of this their greatest artist.

In the great Franciscan church of Santa Croce, which, before its desecration by the vandals of the so-called "Later Renaissance," was assuredly to be counted among the grandest monuments of early Italian art, Vasari mentions no less than four different chapels as having been decorated by Giotto's hand.

Incredible as it may seem, not even the time-honoured name of the great master by whom they were adorned was sufficient to save these beautiful chapels from the deluge of whitewash which the barbaric taste of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries poured out upon the older churches of Italy, and Giotto's paintings shared the common fate of many another masterpiece. The walls of two of these chapels—those of the Bardi and Peruzzi families—have since been freed from their coats of plaster and of wash, and some of the grandest of all Giotto's works rescued from permanent oblivion—not, however, without the inevitable accompaniment of "restoration" and renewal. Nevertheless, deplorably damaged and repainted as they are, the original grandeur of these once splendid frescoes still makes itself felt through the screen of modern paint, stamping them unmistakably as having once belonged to the list of Giotto's most perfect creations, painted at the zenith of his powers. Although all attempts to fix the exact date of these

paintings can but end in mere approximate conjectures, a critical comparison with Giotto's works at Padua and Assisi plainly shows them to belong to a much later period than that fixed upon by many critics, and they are certainly the latest in date of all the master's works preserved to us.[1]

An examination of the two series leaves no doubt as to the Bardi Chapel having been the first to be decorated by Giotto, and here he once more takes up the favoured subject with which he had already shown his powers at Assisi—the Life of St. Francis. Space has here rendered so lengthy a series as that in the Assisan church impossible, and the painter has been obliged to content himself with eight subjects, chosen by his employers as being, in their estimation, the most important ones of all.

Giotto commences on the right wall, with St. Francis' Renunciation of his Father and the World. Let us compare this fresco with the master's treatment of the same subject at Assisi. After making due allowance for the influence of the space—which differs in each representation—upon the general arrangement of the figures, we find that the essential features of the composition are not radically changed. In the later work, painted to fill a long and low lunette, the artist has been allowed far greater freedom for the lengthening out of his design, which has thereby gained in grace over the more compact arrangement of the figures at Assisi. In the matter of action and movement, the two frescoes resemble each

[1] Vasari is clearly mistaken in classing these works, as he does, among those earlier creations of the master, executed before his journey to Rome.

other closely, even to the repetition of certain minor motives. In simple energy of expression, the painting at Assisi distinctly holds the first place, while the later representation is characterized by a greater ease of movement, and a certain dignified quiet and restraint. The work of the restorer has, however, in both cases rendered a just appreciation and comparison of the original figures quite impossible, all such details as those of facial expression having been entirely changed or lost.

In the fresco of St. Francis before Innocent III., in the opposite lunette, Giotto has sought by means of the sloping architectural lines and the addition of the two lateral pairs of figures, to adapt his composition to the space allowed him. In the fulfilment of this intention, he has been singularly successful, although we instinctively feel that the symmetrical balance of the whole has been purchased at the cost of a certain amount of that freedom and naturalness so characteristic of the master as we generally know him. In the treatment of the principal group, Giotto has not essentially departed from his earlier design.

In the painting below, of St. Francis before the Sultan, the master no longer follows the arrangement of the same scene at Assisi, but has here produced an entirely different composition. Restoration has again dealt severely with this once splendid fresco, and is especially to be thanked for the present awkward and badly draped figure of the Saint. Better followed out, however, is the truly noble and expressive one of the Sultan himself, and those of the Saracen guards and the retreating priests. In the last-named, especially, the restorer has kept quite faithfully to the beautiful lines of the original drapery. Very

*Alinari photo*] THE FUNERAL OF ST. FRANCIS [*Sta. Croce, Florence*

Plate 31

fine, in its purity of style and decoration, is the Sultan's throne, with its classic marble canopy.

The Apparition at Arles forms the subject of the fresco next in order. Here, again, although perhaps superior in symmetry of arrangement, Giotto's later work, as it now stands, falls behind his treatment of the subject at Assisi, both in grandeur and in energy of expression.

The painter has combined the next two subjects, those of the Visions of Frate Agostino, and of the Bishop of Assisi, in a single fresco. This painting has suffered more severely than any other of the series, the figure of St. Francis appearing to the Bishop being entirely new, while those of the other personages in both scenes are hardly better off.

We now come to the closing scene of all—the Funeral of the Saint (Pl. 31). Probably, in more ways than one, Giotto's greatest masterpiece, as a composition this work remains unsurpassed, if not unparalleled, in the entire history of Italian art. No words can do the slightest justice to the beauty of this wonderful design, so faultless in its absolute perfection—in a way the culminating effort of the master's genius as an artist, and sufficient in itself to confirm all our claims to the great position held by Giotto, not only as the first painter of his own day, but as one of the greatest of all times. Here, for once, even the sad work of the restorer passes almost unnoticed in our admiration of the whole, and his worst efforts have been powerless to ruin the effect of solemnity and grandeur which still pervades this veritable triumph of Giotto's art.

In the four divisions of the ceiling are representations of St. Francis in Glory, and of those three Virtues

most particularly held in reverence by his order—abridged versions of the far more elaborate Allegories at Assisi.

On either side of the altar, one above the other, are painted the full-length figures of St. Louis of Toulouse [1] and St. Clara, St. Louis, King of France, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary, each in a feigned Gothic niche. Terribly repainted as they are, the original nobility of these figures still shows out clearly from beneath their thick coatings of repaint. Even more unfortunate in the treatment they have received, are the figures of saints in the vaulting of the entrance, preserving as they do, nothing beyond a few vague traces of their original character and design.

High above this arched entrance to the chapel, on the main wall of the church, Giotto painted as a complement to the series—and probably as forming the most significant subject of all—the Reception of the Stigmata by St. Francis (Pl. 32). Comparatively free from restoration, this damaged painting is the only one of the entire series from which we may derive anything resembling a correct conception of the original beauty and nobility of these frescoes, as they left Giotto's hand. To all who give it a moment's real attention, the advance accomplished by the master in his technical rendering of form, movement and expression, will be easily apparent. As compared

[1] Dr. Thode, in his monograph on Giotto, dwells, not without reason, on the fact that St. Louis of Toulouse, whose effigy Giotto has here painted, was not canonized until 1317, a sufficient reason to his mind, for placing the date of these frescoes at a period subsequent to that year—an argument certainly in support of our own opinion as regards this question.

*Alinari photo*] [*Sta. Croce, Florence*

ST. FRANCIS RECEIVING THE STIGMATA

Plate 32

with his earlier treatment of the subject at Assisi, we find here an increased simplicity and conciseness of representation, the painter having eliminated the extra figure of St. Francis' companion, thus concentrating the entire attention of the spectator upon the Saint himself, and the Divine Vision which is the subject of the fresco.

In part even more cruelly repainted than these frescoes of the Bardi Chapel, are those relating to the lives of St. John the Baptist and his namesake the Evangelist, in the adjoining chapel of the Peruzzi family. The monumental style in which these works were originally conceived, is, however, still unmistakably apparent; and they are certainly to be considered as products of the most mature period of Giotto's activity, in all probability posterior in date, by some years at least, to the paintings in the Bardi Chapel, as well as the latest of all the master's existing paintings. Commencing on the left wall, we have three subjects from the life of the Baptist. The first of these represents the appearance of the Angel to Zacharias. So entirely repainted is this fresco, that nothing now remains of the original figures beyond a general sense of their form and movement—sufficient, nevertheless, to afford us some idea of their former beauty. The same may be said with equal truth of the scene that follows—the Birth and Naming of St. John. The fresco of the Feast of Herod (Pl. 33), however, has in some inexplicable manner escaped, to a great extent, the fate of the other paintings, and a goodly portion of Giotto's work is still left to us, in a measure free from the restorer's changes. As in the case of the fresco of the Stigmata in the preceding series, we may still arrive through a study of this one work at a comparatively just appreciation of the

perfection of Giotto's style at this period of his activity. Best preserved of all is the beautiful and justly praised figure of the viol player, but we need not confine our interest to this one personage, for, one and all, the participants in the scene are worthy of careful study and attention. Beneath the archway to the right, Giotto has represented a second episode in the tragedy—Salome presenting the head of the Saint to her mother. Very interesting is the architecture in this painting, and the master's study of classic models comes most strikingly to the fore in the decoration of the *loggia*, foreshadowing, as it does, the work of the later Renaissance.

The lunette fresco on the opposite wall—representing the Vision of St. John the Evangelist on the Isle of Patmos—is chiefly remarkable as an example of Giotto's powers in concisely treating a subject which, in the hands of most painters of the time, was usually spread out into a number of different scenes. The various figures are here too heavily repainted to admit of further discussion of their respective merits. Restoration has also had far more than its due share in the following painting—The Raising of Drusiana—but the striking grandeur of arrangement, the noble dignity of the principal figures, their deep expressiveness of movement, and their splendid development of form, still impress us with much of their original power, proving the uniform excellence at which Giotto had arrived at the time these works were painted. Even grander and far more carefully preserved, is the fresco that follows, representing the legendary Assumption of the Saint (Pl. 34). No later artist ever succeeded in surpassing the perfect realization of movement arrived at by Giotto in this wonderful work. It would indeed

*Alinari photo*] THE FEAST OF HEROD [*Sta. Croce, Florence*

Plate 33

be difficult to conceive of a more dignified, and at the same time a more impressive and rational, conception of the subject than that here given us by Giotto—a worthy climax indeed to the long series of the master's paintings with which we have hitherto become acquainted.

Of the other works executed by Giotto in Santa Croce, nothing now remains. Chief among these must have been the decorations of the chapels belonging to the Giugni, and to the Tosinghi and Spinelli families. Both these chapels were, however, whitewashed together with the others, and early in the past century the last-named was covered with the modern paintings which now deface its walls, Giotto's work being irretrievably lost thereby. As to the famous "Baroncelli" altar-piece—still looked upon by critics as one of the most "authentic" of Giotto's paintings—we must again express our wonderment that any one pretending to the least acquaintance with the master's style should for a moment have mistaken this work for a genuine production of Giotto's brush. A single glance at any of the figures in the composition is certainly sufficient to effectually disprove its present attribution to the master whose name it bears; for, apart from the evident falsity of the signature, the long straight noses, the narrow slit-like eyes, the peculiar folds of the drapery, the comparative slightness of form, all point to a production of one of Giotto's many pupils—in this case very near to Taddeo Gaddi.[1] To Taddeo himself belongs the long series of little panels—once a part of the cupboards in the Sacristy—now in the Academy at Florence.

[1] To the best of our knowledge, Mr. Berenson has been the first and only critic to impugn the authenticity of this work.

These interesting little works relating to the life of Christ and of St. Francis, and so nearly resembling Giotto's own works in composition and in spirit as to easily lead to the supposition that they were executed from the master's own designs, are still by many considered to be entirely his creations. The Last Supper and the other frescoes on the end wall of the Old Refectory are also unmistakable productions of Taddeo.

For a detailed account of the many other paintings said to have been executed by Giotto during these later years of his activity, we must recommend the reader to the pages of Vasari. However inexact that writer's list may be, there is little reason to doubt that, apart from the innumerable works carried out by his many pupils, the master must have fulfilled with his own hand a large number of the endless commissions which poured in upon him both at Florence and elsewhere. Nevertheless, with the exception of the ruined frescoes which we have already examined in the Bardi and Peruzzi chapels, and one or two relatively unimportant little panel pictures, no further traces of the master's industry during these later years of his activity now remain.

*Alinari photo*] THE ASSUMPTION OF ST. JOHN [*St. Croce, Florence*

Plate 34

## CHAPTER X

### THE CAMPANILE AND FINAL WORKS

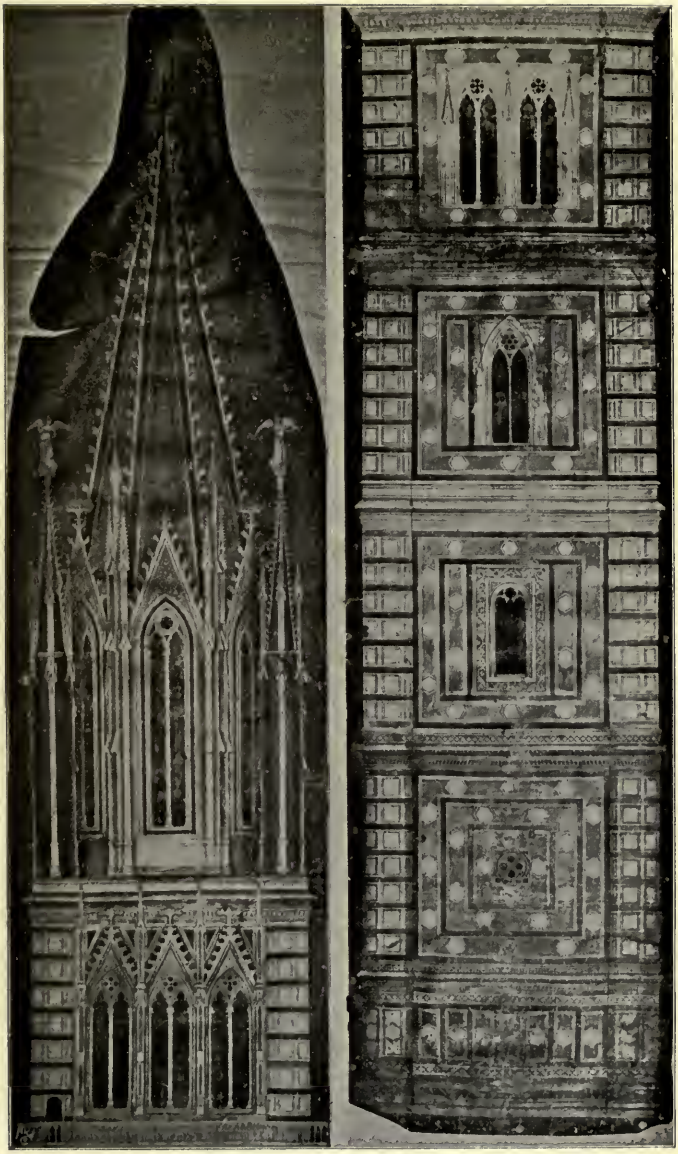
THE exact date of Giotto's journey to Naples is not known to us, although we are in the possession of a document, dated January, 1330, in which he is offered by King Robert the full honours due to a familiar guest. According to Vasari, it was through the recommendation of Duke Charles of Calabria, son of King Robert, that Giotto received the invitation to paint in the southern capital. Charles had been elected Lord of Florence in 1326, and had resided in that city for a good part of the two years preceding his death in 1328, at which time, Vasari further tells us, Giotto was called upon to paint him kneeling at the feet of the Virgin, in the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence. That the painter's stay at the Neapolitan court was a comparatively lengthy one, is proved by another document attesting his presence in that city during 1332-1333, and it is furthermore quite probable that he left Florence for the South at an even earlier period than is generally supposed. Tradition dwells especially on the warm personal friendship which existed between Giotto and his royal patron, and more than one old chronicler is loud in praises of the works executed by the great painter in the Castel Nuovo, the Castel dell' Uovo, and in the church and convent of Sta. Chiara. Of all these great creations, however, not a

vestige now remains, although the many interesting works in the churches of Naples and the surrounding country, by various of the master's followers and pupils, still attest, as at Rome, Florence, and Ravenna, the extraordinary influence exercised by Giotto in these parts. Quite possibly, on his return journey to Florence, he may have stopped and painted at Gaëta, as Vasari tells us in his "Lives," although nothing now remains of his work in that city. Regarding his visit to Rimini and Ravenna, we have already spoken in another place.

Whatever may have been the duration of his stay at Naples, or of his journey back to Florence, he certainly was already in that city by April, 1334, for on the 12th of that month we find him appointed by public decree *Capo-Maestro* of Sta. Reparata, and Architect of the Commune.

The appointment of Giotto to these two important and responsible posts certainly tends to the supposition that he had previously given some material proofs of his architectural talents, or of his genius as an engineer. Unfortunately, we have no means of ascertaining if this were really the case, and, beyond a few traditional attributions, nothing remains to us by which we may gauge the master's ability in these branches of art and science.

The exact extent of the work accomplished on the Cathedral itself under Giotto's superintendence is not precisely known. Tradition has it that he commenced the decoration of the old façade, which, however, was never completed, remaining in an unfinished state until 1588, when it was finally removed. How far Giotto was really responsible for this and other works connected with the building of the Cathedral, it is impossible to



*Lombardi photo*] [*Opera del Duomo, Siena*

DRAWING FOR THE CAMPANILE

Plate 35

ascertain; certain it is, however, that to him alone was due the original conception of that most daringly imaginative of all towers—the Campanile which still bears his name.

The foundation stone of this famous tower was laid on July 18th, 1334, in the presence of the Bishop of Florence, the Priors, and a great gathering of the people, the event being made the occasion for a grand and solemn procession on the part of the Florentines. The building seems hardly to have progressed beyond the first story with the bas-reliefs, however, when Giotto died in 1336. In the hands of Andrea Pisano, who was appointed to succeed him, Giotto's original plan seems to have undergone essential alteration. The nature of Andrea's changes, however, evidently failed to meet with the approval of his employers, and the commission to complete the tower was transferred to Francesco Talenti. To this genial architect is due the greater part of the present edifice, the entire three last stories having been carried out beneath his supervision.

Whether Talenti returned in part to Giotto's original design, or whether he is alone responsible for the work as it now stands, it is impossible to determine with any certainty, no authentic copy of Giotto's plan having been handed down to us. There exists, however, in the Opera del Duomo at Siena, an old drawing (Pl. 35) first brought to the notice of the critical public some years ago by Signor Nardini-Despotti, which, according to that writer, represents Giotto's original conception of the tower. Certainly a careful study of this work can but incline us toward the acceptance of Signor Nardini's opinion. The base of the present building—the part that is generally attri-

buted to Giotto himself—certainly coincides perfectly with the drawing, which further brings to mind Vasari's statement that the edifice was to have been crowned, according to Giotto's original design, by a spire fifty *braccia* in height, which scheme was, however, abandoned by the later architects as being "a German thing and of antiquated fashion."

If Giotto's share in the building of the Campanile has given rise to endless discussions, still more words have been spent in regard to the famous series of bas-reliefs which adorn the walls of its first story. It has been a time-honoured tradition that the great master himself both designed and executed these beautiful works, and Ghiberti goes so far as to tell us that, in his day, Giotto's original clay models for some of them were still to be seen in Florence. By many modern critics, however, Giotto's connection with these works has been altogether denied, and the entire honour of their creation given to Andrea Pisano. A comparison of the reliefs with the known works of Andrea and Giotto can, however, leave no doubt as to their having been originally designed by the latter master. To all who have studied the creations of the two artists, the great difference in their style can but be apparent. Gifted as he was with a far keener feeling for abstract beauty, the graceful and charming manner of Andrea is hardly to be confounded with the far grander and more simply naturalistic one of Giotto, unless, indeed, Andrea's style may have undergone a complete and radical change during the short period of time between the completion of the famous Baptistery Doors in 1330, and the probable execution of the bas-reliefs in question some four or five years later—a suppo-

*Alinari photo*] [*Bas-relief on Campanile, Florence*

JABAL

Plate 36

sition hardly within the range of probability. On the other hand, the exquisite execution of these reliefs certainly betokens the handiwork of a practised sculptor, and although the versatility of Giotto's genius would by no means exclude the possibility of his having been a master of the chisel as well as of the brush, we have no reason to believe that he ever practically exercised the stone-cutter's art. Essentially a painter by profession, it would have been but natural that the technical execution of his designs should have been intrusted to his friend and contemporary Andrea, then the greatest sculptor of his day; and to that artist and his pupils is undoubtedly due this share in the production of these works.

Twenty-seven in number, the different reliefs represent the creation of man and his subsequent earthly occupations, commencing with the older and more primitive branches of industry, and ending with the higher arts and sciences. The series has its beginning on the western wall, where are represented: the *Creation of Man*—the *Creation of Woman*—the *Toiling of Adam and Eve*—*Pastoral Life* (Jabal in his Tent) (Pl. 36)—*Jubal, the Inventor of Musical Instruments*—*Tubal Cain*, first of Metal-workers—the *Drunkenness of Noah*, possibly representative of the First Vintage. To the south we have: *Astronomy*—*Building*—*Pottery*—*Riding*—*Weaving* (Pl. 37)—the *Giving of Law*—and *Daedalus*, representing, according to Mr. Ruskin, the Conquest of the Element of Air. On the eastern side are: *Navigation*—*Hercules and Antæus*, or the "Victory of Intelligence and Civilization over Brute Force"—*Agriculture*—*Trade* (?), or rather the Subjection of the Horse to Draught — the

*Lamb of the Resurrection* (above the entrance door)—*Geometry*. On the north wall: *Sculpture and Painting*. The remaining five reliefs: *Grammar*, *Arithmetic*, *Logic*, *Song*, and *Harmony*, are later works by Luca della Robbia. The second row of reliefs higher up on the walls are undoubtedly productions of the school of Andrea, and in one or two cases possibly by Andrea himself.

Reasons of space unfortunately prevent us from entering into any detailed description of these truly beautiful compositions. Whatever may have been Giotto's exact share in their creation, sufficient it is that in them we find, carried to the highest point of possible perfection, all the grandly characteristic qualities of that master's genius with which we have already become so intimately acquainted in our examination of his paintings. Nowhere do we find his study of Nature shown to better advantage —nowhere, at the same time, is his appreciation of classic models more apparent. In their concise simplicity of conception, in their directness of expression, and in their deep significance of thought, these designs nearly approach the famous Allegories in the Paduan Arena, and are, with them, to be classed among the most characteristic of all the master's works. Once again, the comparison of Giotto's conceptions with the treatment of the same subjects by earlier mediæval artists, and more especially with the work of Niccolo and Giovanni Pisano on the public fountain at Perugia, will reward all who may spare the time to make it. For those who would more closely study these wonderful reliefs, we can but recommend a careful perusal of the sixth chapter of Ruskin's "Mornings in Florence."

Onerous as may have been Giotto's duties as an archi-

*Alinari photo*] [*Bas-relief on Campanile, Florence*

WEAVING

Plate 37

tect and as an engineer, they do not seem to have interfered, to any really great extent, with his activity as a painter, and it was in this capacity, Villani tells us, that he was sent by the Florentine Republic to Milan, in order to fulfil certain commissions for Azzone Visconti, then lord and ruler of that city, who had expressed his great desire that the master's services might be spared him for a time. The exact duration of his stay in that city is not known to us, but it was evidently here that Giotto painted his last works, for Villani tells us, that shortly after his return to Florence, he passed away from the scene of his earthly labours on the 8th of January, 1336 (1337)—as full of honour as of years.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE GENIUS OF GIOTTO

THERE exists, perhaps, in the entire history of art, no single personage whose character is more truly reflected in his works than is the case with Giotto di Bondone. To us they are a lasting commentary on his life, and from them we may draw a far truer idea of the man than any written documents could possibly afford; nor could the result of our deductions be more clearly or beautifully expressed than in the words of Ruskin: "His love of beauty was entirely free from weakness; his love of truth untinged by severity; his industry constant, without impatience; his workmanship accurate, without formalism; his temper serene, and yet playful; his imagination exhaustless, without extravagance; and his faith firm, without superstition."

Of the master's private life we know comparatively nothing beyond the fact that he was married to a certain Ciuta di Lapo, of the Popolo of Sta. Reparata, by whom he became the father of eight children: Francesco, whose name we find inscribed among the members of the Company of Painters in 1351; Caterina, who married the painter Ricco di Lapo; Lucia, Chiara, Bice, Donato, a second Francesco, by calling a priest, and Niccola.

Giotto seems never to have forgotten his native home in the quiet Val di Mugello, and documents prove to us

that he possessed considerable landed property in those parts. In Florence, also, he appears to have owned several houses, and we can easily imagine that he amassed no small amount of wealth during his long life of constant industry and toil.

Many are the anecdotes related of him by the writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as well as by Vasari. Although not entirely dissimilar to the traditions which gather, in the course of time, about the personality of every great artist, we find among them, in this present case, a strange and significant coincidence in their painting of the man ; and, each and all, they tend but to confirm our own previous conception of his nature. An alert shrewdness and an abundance of sound and practical common sense seem to go hand in hand with an amiable humour, and a quick but kindly wit. Little wonder that a nature so perfectly balanced as was his made him the chosen companion of the greatest minds of his day; little wonder that his company was sought for both by scholars and by princes.

As an artist, we have already made clear to the reader Giotto's position among the painters of his time. The history of art affords no parallel to the tremendous transformation effected by him in the field of painting during the short period of his earlier artistic activity. Not only did he bring about a fundamental change in the technical treatment, as well as in the spiritual significance, of his art, but he succeeded in raising it to a position of independence such as it had never before enjoyed. Eminently a naturalist, in the highest meaning of the term, his work is equally removed from the stiff conventionality of his Byzantine predecessors, and the

trivial and photographic realism of a later age. His was an *idealized naturalism*, one which aimed at the expression of Nature's deeper truths, far rather than at the exact reproduction of her more obvious outward details.

To many modern critics the technical development of his art may leave much to be desired; but to him his means were amply sufficient unto his ends. Indeed, these very so-called technical deficiencies serve but to accentuate his marvellous artistic powers; and we can bring to mind no other artist who can be said to have accomplished as much as did Giotto, at so wonderfully slight an expenditure of means. The direct simplicity and significance of every line and touch, of every movement and gesture, of every detail and of every spot of colour, cannot possibly escape the observation of any serious student of Giotto's art. Nor does there exist a single genuine creation of the master's brush which does not possess, to a greater or a less extent, this same marked spirit of concise expression.

Of the versatility of his genius we have already had occasion to remark. If we may believe the writings of the earlier historians, he united to his gifts as a painter, architect and engineer, those of a poet. Of his productions in this field we have been left but a single example—a long poem on the Virtue of Voluntary Poverty—in which, however, the practical qualities of his nature are as clearly and vividly apparent as in any of his paintings.

Of the technical innovations which Giotto introduced into the art of his day in the matter of colour and design, and, above all, in the representation of plastic form,

we have already spoken in the preceding pages of this little book.

The first to break away from the trammels and conventions of the painting of his time, Giotto not only laid the foundations of a new art, but during his own lifetime brought it to such a stage of perfection as to limit the progress of the succeeding centuries of the Renaissance to a mere development of technical detail. In dramatic force of representation, in unfailing directness of expression, in concise significance of action, in dignity and nobility of conception, in sanity of imagination and sincerity of feeling, he stands unsurpassed among the painters of Italy and the world. In Masaccio and Filippo Lippi, in Michelangelo, in Titian and in Tintoretto, vastly different as they seem among themselves, we find his legitimate successors—men showing, to a greater or a less degree, these same qualities of his genius. In no one of them, however, do we find that rare and perfect combination of all these varied gifts, which was so uniquely his possession; and it is in this respect, if in no other, that Giotto must remain to us and to all time as one of the greatest artists that the world has ever known.

Of Giotto's numberless followers and pupils, we have made but slight and passing mention in these pages. Spread as they were, during the master's own lifetime, throughout the length and breadth of Italy, we must reserve for a future volume the study of their art and of its influences, as space forbids us here from entering into any discussion either of their faults or of their merits. As to their technical methods of execution, which were also Giotto's own, we cannot do better than refer the reader to the famous treatise of Cennino Cennini on that subject.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE PANEL PICTURES

TIME has left us but few panel pictures from the hand of Giotto, and none equalling in importance the great Stefaneschi altar-piece at Rome which, as we have already stated, is not only the earliest recognizable work of the master now in existence, but also the only one, the approximate date of whose execution is known to us.[1] There are, however, a few examples of this branch of Giotto's art still existing in public and private collections, as to whose authenticity no doubt need be expressed, and we have for reasons of comparison purposely reserved our notice of them to the present moment.

Earliest, in date of execution, is undoubtedly the little picture of the Presentation, now belonging to Mrs. J. L. Gardner, of Boston, U.S.A. As far as regards composi-

[1] Mr. Berenson is of the opinion that Giotto's earliest recognizable work is to be found in three little panels—one in the possession of the Duke of Northumberland, the others in the Munich Gallery (Nos. 979, 980). The first of these we have not seen. As to the two beautiful little pictures at Munich, we must beg to differ with Mr. Berenson regarding their authorship, for, although possessing to an extraordinary degree Giotto's exceptional sense of form, they appear to lack the vitality and force so characteristic of the master. In the matter of drapery, facial and bodily types, and general expression, they seem to us the work of one of the more talented of Giotto's pupils.

tion, this painting foreshadows Giotto's fresco of the same subject at Padua, although the figures do not appear to have arrived at the fullness of form so conspicuous in the later work—a fact which would lead us to place it among the productions of the master's later Assisan period.

Closely connected with the frescoes of the Life of St. Francis at Assisi, but in all probability painted at a somewhat later date, is the large altar-piece, once in the church of San Francesco at Pisa, now in the Louvre. Vasari tells us that this work was held in such veneration by the Pisans as to have been the direct cause of Giotto being called to paint in the Campo Santo of that city, where he executed the frescoes relating to the trials of Job, which works in turn led to his invitation to Rome by Pope Benedict IX (?)—a piece of fiction in Vasari's most genial vein. In the arrangement of its principal subject, the Stigmatization of St. Francis, this work resembles very closely its predecessor at Assisi, even to the details of the background. For reasons, probably of space, Giotto has omitted the figure of the Saint's companion, as in the later fresco above the Bardi Chapel. The proportions of the kneeling figure are slightly less heavy and compact than in the larger wall-painting at Assisi; the attitude, however, is identical in both cases. In the *predella* below are represented the Dream of Innocent III., the Presentation of the Rules of the Order, and the Sermon to the Birds—all faithfully copied from the frescoes of the same scenes at Assisi. A comparison of this altar-piece with its different prototypes is at once instructive and of the greatest importance in revealing, to some extent, the original strength and beauty of those works of which it is evidently so faithful a reflection; for, although

this painting has suffered severely from age and restoration—the original colour being almost entirely lost—much of Giotto's handiwork still remains.

Belonging to the master's Paduan period is the small painting of the Last Supper, No. 983 of the Munich Gallery. Slightly earlier in date is the Crucifixion (No. 981) in the same collection.

The beautiful Crucifix in the sacristy of the Arena Chapel at Padua is also an unmistakable production of Giotto's brush. This work—the most exquisitely finished of all his panel pictures—is to our mind the only one of all the many Crucifixes attributed to the master that can be looked upon as a genuine work of his hand.

Not far removed from this same period of his Paduan activity, is the large painting of the Virgin and Child surrounded by Saints and Angels (Pl. 38), now in the Academy at Florence, originally in the church of Ognissanti in that city. Located as it now is, beside the great altar-piece attributed to Cimabue, this work affords the spectator an exceptional opportunity for the comparison of Giotto's art with that of his Florentine contemporaries and predecessors. Indeed, we can hardly think but that it was painted by the master as a special challenge to the Florentine painters of the time, for, although holding closely to the conventional composition of the older school, he has thrown into this great picture of the Virgin all the force and power of his new ideals. Let those who will, carefully compare this work with the many older pictures of the Madonna still in existence—such a comparison will do far more than mere words toward accentuating the great differences between the art of Giotto and that of his predecessors.

*Anderson photo*] [*Accademia, Florence*

THE VIRGIN ENTHRONED

# CATALOGUE OF WORKS

ALNWICK CASTLE. *Duke of Northumberland.* Panel with Sposalizio: St. Francis receiving Stigmata, etc. (?)

ASSISI. *S. Francesco, Lower Church:*

*R. Transept.* Frescoes from Lives of Christ and Virgin, Miracles of St. Francis.

*Above High Altar.* Four Allegories.

*Chapel of St. Mary Magdalen.* Frescoes from Life of Magdalen (in part).

*Upper Church.* Frescoes from Life of St. Francis (first nineteen subjects), Virgin and Child.

BOSTON, U.S.A. *Mrs. J. L. Gardner.* Presentation (panel).

FLORENCE. *Academy*, No. 103. Madonna with Saints and Angels (panel).

*Santa Croce, Bardi Chapel.* Frescoes from Life of St. Francis.

*Peruzzi Chapel.* Frescoes from Lives of Baptist and St. John Evangelist.

MUNICH. *Gallery*, No. 981. Crucifixion (panel).

No. 983. Last Supper (panel).

PADUA. *Arena Chapel.* Frescoes (all with the exception of those in choir).

*In Sacristy.* Crucifix (panel).

*S. Antonio, Sala del Capitolo.* Frescoes of Saints.

PARIS. *Louvre*, No. 1312. St. Francis receiving Stigmata, with predelle (panel).

ROME. *S. Pietro, Sagrestia dei Canonici.* Stefaneschi altar-piece.

*S. Giovanni Laterano.* Boniface VIII. proclaiming the Jubilee, 1300 (fragment of a fresco).

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